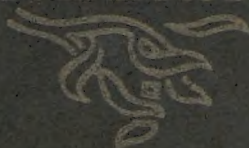




The SOUL
of an —
ARTIST

NEERA





THE SOUL OF
AN ARTIST

THE SOUL OF AN ARTIST

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN OF
NEERA

BY

E. L. MURISON

WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY
L. D. VENTURA

Anima mia, mio asilo!



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FOREWORD

It was a work of duty on my part, who derived a great consolation from the reading of this book by Neera — a countrywoman of mine — to put before the translator this true and gentle book. It was a work of generosity on her part to gather the sighs of a lonely soul, to understand them with that intuition which has neither geographic nor moral frontier, and to translate them, so that other lonely souls might also derive consolation.

A romance made up of magnetic atoms in the air hovers over this book: a whole honest romance of sadness, conceived, transmitted and put together, to be found expressed in the language of souls, which has only one alphabet.

This book of Neera has, according to my idea, no counterpart but, possibly, Amiel's Journal Intime. I shall not say here fully why it appeals to me, neither is it necessary for the translator to do more than to present the book, for it speaks for itself; it will be clear to all those who possess to the highest degree ideality and sentiment, to those for whom common, every-day life is not the last desideratum.

Is this "Anima Sola" a novel? No. An autobiography? No. A poem? No. It is simply a book, in the amplest signification of the word, a

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companion, a friend, — exquisite pages of thoughts, of love, of life. A very original work in conception and form, it elicited, since its appearance in Italy as well as in Germany, the most conflicting criticisms. Pervaded by subdued fervor, it is a refined book which, alas, will not meet with the delirium of the multitude: yet every reader will find amidst the many thoughts expressed something of personal benefit, and will feel its peculiar charm, thus leading to an interest in the study of the author, a woman who, with each of her volumes, gives us a surprise either of idea or of form.

Foremost among the Italian writers of both sexes, in spite of the advertisement which has been lavished in the wrong direction and to which she has a strong antipathy, she shares with the best writers of Italy the healthy privilege of writing to say something with a moral and practical purpose. Her work is signalized by a constant aspiration toward the new and toward the better. She has treated the novel in almost all its forms, realistic, mystic, psychological; she has written pages of morals, of poetry, of sociology, and now, with "*Un Anima Sola*," she goes out of whatever is known and seen and whatever has been read into a new field. Never before, as in this novel, has she touched the high idealities of life, never has she surpassed herself as a stylist.

When this book was published in the German translation, the cover bore the portrait of Eleanora

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Duse. The translator hinted by this at the possibility of Neera having taken Duse as a model of her heroine. Possibly Duse, one of the most sensitive personalities of our century, has contributed in a large proportion to the composite portrait of Neera's heroine, who, for me, represents in one person the soul of many. Blessed those who, like Duse, can live many lives, or assimilate the feelings and the precious sensations of souls. She can check her own misery living in the remembrance of others. The theatre has furnished her the remembrance of many lives that she has impersonated, and she can ruminate over the hours of misery consoled by instants of glory — proud of having awakened the conscience of others in becoming a martyr.

And, since we are on the subject of theatres, and of artists, let me quote Glatigny, who was a poet and a Bohemian actor, and took the stage as a compensation to life. He speaks to the bourgeois, showing his rags:

"Nos habits vous font voir les cordes de nos lyres." And Clartie in "Brichanteau Célèbre":

"If you wish to continue to run the chance of this macabre lottery — the theatre — you must keep until the last hour the love of your art: to love it for its success, for its failures: you must keep until the last minute your love and faith of the first years, to believe in that which exists not, to believe in the dream and say to oneself that, in its distributive justice, destiny has been clement if it has given you

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one minute of illusion : illusion, my friends, is perhaps the only thing which permits men to live their own lives."

The author of "Anima Sola" who signs with the nom de plume Neera, in private life is Anna Zuccari, wife of Signor Radius. She is a Florentine by birth, a Milanese by choice. Among her best novels are "Un Romanzo," "Vecchie Catene," "Addio," "Il Castigo," "Freccia del Pardo," "Un Nido," "Lidia," etc. While indulging in writing of glorious battles, ignoble victories, and of the throes of a soul in the grasp of that overpowering passion, love, she is very domestic, the angel of her home, — not at all the portrait of any of the heroines of her books. Personally ten years ago she was considered a beauty, tall, with brilliant black eyes — a graceful figure, and a woman of very nervous, sympathetic temperament.

This new book is a consolation to all those who, endowed with a high sensitive nature, are obliged by circumstances to live alone, and to keep hidden, for fear of deception or disillusion, that sacred flame which otherwise would have shown and lighted the road to a hero.

L. D. Ventura.

San Francisco, October, 1905.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

If at their first utterance "thoughts break through language and escape," how warily should a translator set to work! Especially difficult is this literary chemistry in dealing with elements so rich in quality and so volatile in their onomatopoeic power as the Italian where sometimes each letter is informed with sweetness and with meaning. The proverb "traduttore, traditore" (a translator, a traitor), is fitted especially to this tongue, not only from the possible paronomasia but from its exposition of the arduousness of matching the harmonies and suggestions of even the most ordinary expressions della lingua dolce. In the work just completed I have aimed above all to be faithful to the original, and have been so in parts almost to too great a literalness, and I have given the sense of the author always even when a slight perversion might have lent music to a period and given more satisfaction to the ear. For there is but this one excuse for adding another volume to the already overcrowded book-shelves: First, that an author has something of value to say, and, second, that he should know how to say it.

And it is in place here to render some account of the purpose of this translation. The labor was undertaken in a dark hour to lay the ghost of a haunting sorrow; for "Anima Sola" is the outpour-

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ing of a lonely soul, and had in its very name a promise of sympathy and, perhaps, of comfort. The time and effort expended had at least a temporary reward of forgetfulness, and it is my hope that some one else may profit by my work and find solace in the thoughts here transferred to English.

E. L. Murison.

July 12, 1905.

TO
LAWRENCE DUDLEY
MARQUIS OF MIDDLEFORTH
WHEREVER HE MAY BE

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*When between the world and
me there was a veil of clouds.*

I am about to undertake something very strange, yes, very strange for me. I am seated at my little table and have opposite me your chair, that chair in which I have seen you seated so many times and which now is empty, yet not absolutely empty; there yet remains a little of your atmospheric presence, as it were.

You smile? At least reserve your judgment. I am not a *lettarrata*, one of those women so justly antipathetic to men. I am not writing a romance nor have I a public expecting my pages. I do not know whether these will number ten or twenty or a hundred. I have written so little in my life.

Do not discourage me then. You see it is a great proof of my confidence in you, my thus selecting you as interlocutor. I confess this is a necessity to me; it would have been impossible for me to write without addressing some one in this manner. How do the romance writers manage? I cannot imagine. I, for my part, pretend to speak to you and so I accomplish my purpose.

But there is something else strange: Where are you? Do you still live? Is there a chance in a thousand that you will ever read these pages?

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And do you remember me? I have heard it said that certain planets encounter one another once in the long course of ages; and so may we meet. Should I print, my book might reach you in some solitude whither you have withdrawn your monastic soul disdainful of the world. But I do not write for the press, and I do not believe that my heirs will give themselves the task of having these lines published. I write, then, with almost the certainty that you will never read me.

And what matter? Have you ever responded to the unquiet interrogatories of my soul? It was enough for me to speak them out to you! There is a dark and indefinable fascination in speaking to one who does not answer. Is it not in some sort like the prayers murmured at the foot of the cross? To the Invisible one dares to say everything. It would be absurd to write a romance with such a program, but, then, since this is not a romance!

I remember one day in my early years, — you know, those sad years which I passed so differently from other women, — I had not yet loved, but like those buds which in spring make turgid the summits of the trees, my heart was swollen with a passion I could not place. An orphan, without affections, solitary, ignorant, confided to the care of a woman even more ignorant than I, with the prospect of poverty and vulgar toil, what could I hope? Nothing.

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Without knowing them, I renounced all the joys of earth, the most curious thing being that the renunciation was painless, and when, in my own spite, the fire of youth would seek an outlet, instead of bursting forth, it burned within. Do I make myself clear? The growth was all inward.

Hear what I did one day. It was autumn — my aunt made me pass some time at a dairy-farm of I know not what province, I know only that the country was all green, the hills covered with vineyards, and before our house there ran a little torrent called La Versa. I was alone there as everywhere. A stagnant water seemed to hold me prisoner within the confines of a world which I knew was not mine. The sentiment of protection, that security, that abandon which makes so sweet the life of children in happy families, all this I lacked, nor had I any model before me, one whom I could trust, could love intensely; for my admiration, the prime necessity of ardent souls, I had no objective.

Everything said and done around me, the subjects of discourse, the material interests, the manner of judging, the pleasures, the sorrows, the pastimes, the annoyances, the good and the evil, all left me so indifferent that many pronounced me stupid, others heartless, and others again proud. And I was self-reproachful. Since all agreed to blame me they must have been in the right; and, at the same time, I was sure I

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was not wholly in the wrong; but my emotions were like objects shut up in a box to which there was no key. I knew they were there, but how get them out?

Thus came the day in which, finding my heart more than ever o'ercharged, I succeeded in escaping surveillance and very softly opening the house door I turned backwards, taking a path which led to the mountains. This, too, will appear singular to you, but everything I have to tell you is singular: I felt then for the first time the pleasure of living; and for the first time I observed that the sky had many gradations of tender blue and rose suffused and veiled by the white, palpitating atmosphere; and the trees seemed alive with their subdued whispers, with their sweetly evanescent perfumes, and in the air, in the light, even in the shadow there was a soul.

I spread wide my arms and holding them somewhat lifted, I continued to ascend, ascend — wonderful sensation! The moment I was alone my isolation ceased. My heart swelled in a wordless and toneless Bacchanal; and it took wings; and all that sang and flew about me, birds, butterflies, flower-petals, all were my friends and brothers.

And so I reached the hilltop, so light, so happy and with a confused desire mounting through all my being, a need of vent, an ardor which for the first time broke its bounds, almost the need of a

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prayer, which, in that divine moment, seemed to me must be granted. *God!*

A profound joy and a great audacity invaded me looking at the solitude which surrounded me; that air and that heaven all for me, that horizon, that world which offered itself so vast and so all unknown to me so young. No image of terror mixed with my festival.

Erect, embracing in my glance as great a space as possible, my brow uplifted, I cried, "God!" I really cried it, measuring for the first time the pitch of my voice, marveling that that cry should fall so sweetly down the green declivity without awaking any protest, any recrimination. "God! God! God!" Three times I said it and listened. Nature listened with me and was witness of the rite. In that moment I had my spousal with *some one*.

Would you like to know how I looked at that time? Then I did not know, but now I can see myself as I then was, — tall and slender, but not flexible, so that my little head and thin shoulders and my still childlike arms stiffened to almost an attitude of continual protest. A great lack of balance there was between my form hardly yet molded to femininity and the serious profound expression of my eyes relieved by a faint sad smile. When later, in the midst of an elegant crowd, at a feast day, there reached my ear, pronounced by a stranger, the first compliment

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to my beauty, it seemed so strange that I have never forgotten it. It was said that my eyes were oriental.

And you will believe me when I confess that it was not the vanity of the praise nor the stimulus of coquetry which piqued me at that moment, but a subtle spiritual curiosity to know which might exercise the greater power upon others, beauty or plainness, joy or sorrow. It is a problem which has always preoccupied me, my incapacity to enjoy the present moment such as it appears, and to give myself up to it with that philosophic sensuality which so perfectly isolates the to-day from to-morrow and yesterday. I have never had the fever of life; mine has been rather a semi-consciousness broken by frequent visions. Nay, the vision itself is imposed as a higher state, as a refuge and a salvation.

Perhaps magnetic sleep is such, perhaps such the trances of certain poets and certain saints. If I were as learned as you I could formulate some theory of my sensations; ignorant as I am, I attempt to describe them, but I feel that in certain particulars even this undertaking surpasses my powers. Pity me and try to comprehend even what I do not know how to express, that above all!

I have sometimes begun to laugh, reading and thinking; and more often have I wept. But why have I never either laughed or wept with others?

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In the evenings of my greatest triumphs when all the theater was stirred and a thousand hands were raised to applaud me, the exterior I was moved, but my true I, always somnambulous, wondered at the noise and sought still in the darkness its internal and solitary way. In truth I tell you: There is one within me who will have me all in all.

How distant is that day! I confide these things to you, because you too were born a twin; you too will never find that companion soul whom all seek, according to the Platonic theory (a theory not for us), to the moment when it is ours indeed and forms one soul with our own. It will prevent our ever giving ourselves completely, though loving more than others and with greater force.

I comprehended this at once the first time I saw you, — do you remember when?

I know the hour, the light, even the various tints of green which the trees had that day in the Villa Borghese; and my spiritual state, sad and tranquil, and my posture, somewhat weary, seated upon the edge of the fountain, writing a name in the sand with the point of my parasol, a name which was not yours —

The villa was so deserted at that hour that your step upon the dry leaves made me raise my head suddenly; and as you gradually drew near me, in your figure, in your face, in the indefinable

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color of your eyes, in your manner of looking at me and in that of your stopping, courteous, but cold and slightly disdainful, I recognized you as different from all others and I thought with a new and palpitating sensation of intimate surprise: "Who may this be?" And as if you had heard my question, in that very moment you presented yourself: "I am the Marquis of Middleforth."

You see these are but little threads, — is it not of little threads that all webs are composed? The webs devoted to modest and familiar uses, those which clothe the soldier and which wave above his head with the proud name of banners, those destined to struggle with winds and waves, those which cover altars, and those which make the sympathies and the relationships of the soul are little fragile threads likewise wound by the Unknown about the unconscious distaffs of the men and women to whose use they are destined.

A few days before at Milan, after the great fiasco of the "Abbess of Monreal," I had received a letter signed "Marquis of Middleforth," in which, setting aside the failure of the dramatic work, the unknown writer acknowledged the power of sentiment transfused by me into the character of the Abbess. I did not doubt for a moment that, in spite of the distance between the two cities, you and the unknown correspondent were the same person, and not even the slightest

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suspicion arose in me that you might be other than you are, a man to be trusted. You, then, — and it is one of my most profound, most delicate joys, — overcoming the repugnance, usually your sentiment toward actresses, you came to me, guided by that invisible thread which leads the soul; you did this in a manner so natural as to be almost absurd to others. What more natural than to introduce yourself?

O the sweet mystery of that our first conversation! You began at once to speak of the “Abbess of Monreal,” saying that, despite its great defects, there pleased you in this work a certain latent ardor which I had known to render almost to perfection. “Almost” — you repeated — “for I feel within me an ideal stronger and more complex.”

At this point we were silent. I was thinking that I could not then explain to you, then or perhaps ever, by what means the character of the Abbess had awakened within me that anguish of broken illusions which you would have desired stronger and more complex.

The literary success of the *Abbesse de Jouarre* had inspired one of our young authors with this subject taken from the Spanish Chronicles at the time of the Moors. Do you remember?

A girl of royal stock, stolen from her native Africa and secluded in a convent of old Castile, grows there in perfect consonance of ideas and

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of aspirations with the sisters that surround her; only her piety is more ardent, her zeal more passionate, her prayers more poetic, her abstinence more exalted and continuous. In the country of Saint Theresa and Maria Alacoque the young savage was a marvel of sanctity.

You may imagine how deeply I feel this situation. I see her, the young exile, in those azure nights made delicious by the jasmine scent, kneeling in her cell, her eyes and heart turned to that mysterious country of fascinating and distant records. Made Abbess of the convent, her mysticism grows. It is in the church paved with funereal marble or in the wide level space of the garden in the center of which there dominates a cross that she gathers about her all the sisters every night, for the day does not suffice for her mania of divine love. All Castile proclaims her saint; from the most distant countries there is a concourse to implore her benediction. She no longer eats or sleeps or speaks; etherealized, she passes her days in ecstasy. This is the whole first act which so much pleased you, while the audience could not dissemble its impatience.

But that moment of revulsion, when upon the cloistered silence there fell the clamor of arms, and the howling Moors beat against the doors of the convent! What was my countenance, what the expression of my eyes in that fulminating moment of revelation? And why was it that, when

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without speaking, moving resolutely toward the sisters, I ran myself to open the doors, a long applause — the only occasion throughout the drama — shook the theater from pit to ceiling?

We discussed, or rather you did, that sudden transition, that apostasy from twenty years of conventual devotion, excited by the unexpected return of voices, of clamor and tumult of warring men which moved her to throw herself into the arms of the invaders with that cry, "O my Country!" which you thought vulgar, which to me seemed, instead, so profoundly typical.

Yes, it was under the trees of the Villa Borghese, in the splendid sunset of a Roman sky, that you, a stranger, said to me that you could not comprehend that invocation to a fatherland.

I thought that you must always have been very happy, and looked closely at the perfect form of your head, at your brow upon which eight or ten scholarly generations had set the seal of sovereignty and impressed upon every line of your countenance an infallible distinction of race. A few moments before, you had told me that it was your intention to tour Italy without any limit of time or place; you were, then, rich and free, besides noble and intellectual. A young life without struggle, beautified by the brightest smiles of fortune, had conducted you to the full and complete possession of your rights as a superior man.

And again silence was between us, after these

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reflections. The evening fell. The dampness of the trees made me think with a shudder of the days of my childhood passed in a cottage, beside an ignorant old woman, among people whose rudimental goodness was poor excuse in my eyes for their invincible vulgarity; of the piece of bread which they gave me and of the hunger of the soul in which they let me languish; and an indescribable tenderness moved me for the poor girl that I had been.

In you, the hour must have awakened very different images; perhaps your paternal castle gay with the flames of crackling pine logs leaping under the arabesque arch of the fireplace, the style of the Stuart reign; and the fantastic park seen through the polychromatic crystal; and your mother, your sweet mother, who caressed you.

"You should go to see the cupola of St. Peter gilded by the reflections of the last rays," you said.

I arose as the most natural thing, as if it had been understood that we should leave together, as if I had known you always. As I moved I saw that your foot had canceled the name written by me in the sand with the point of my parasol, nor did I grieve — it seemed, as it were, a liberation. I believe I gave no sign of feeling, although every memory slighted leaves a wound, and from then I knew your extraordinary delicacy. With an accent and a glance which I had not yet ob-

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served in you, you murmured softly, in an affectionate tone which contrasted the dominating timber of your voice:

"I hope I have not displeased you. At any rate, shall we be friends?"

The mysterious veil of your eyes raised itself, and I gazed deep into a heaven of radiant blue. How we understood each other in that moment! Two or three times only, in the days that followed, did I see in your pupils and in the iris, usually clouded, that surrounded them, that sudden and rapid gleam, like a momentary baring of your soul.

It is sweet to me thus to turn back to hours of the past, because I have no doubt that happiness consists more of hours than of days, and more of thoughts than of things.

How should I forget the lively pleasure, frank and reciprocal, which neither of us tried to dissimulate, when we met a few days after at the Pantheon! For the horror of the common words, we had parted without any promise of another meeting, but the certainty of our coming together again had made our farewell very sweet. With that passionate regret for the irrevocable, I think now of the ardor with which you must have sought me, feverishly, madly, through the streets of Rome.

"Among the tombs," you said, saluting me.

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I looked at you, surprised to find you so young; and while at first you had seemed to me pale and almost too serious, I discovered now, with a certain timidity, the delicate freshness of your color and your mouth so childlike in its austere beard, giving the effect of a bud peeping from dark foliage. I had an instant of shame, and during this I believe I blushed.

"You have not acted recently," you said again.

I answered a dry No! without giving any cause, busied as I was in asking myself your age.

We had stopped before the tomb of the great King, but you stood at one side, with your face raised, and the light from the *impluvium* so clearly revealed your face that I could trace the lines of that strange mouth at once so young and so cruel, forming in your smile an acute arc. I observed, too, under the pride of your profile, the evidence of that spirituality which your eyes so fully confirmed and which emanated from all your person, like a fluid between you and the world, which I call your air. Alfred di Vigny and Chateaubriand must have looked something like you.

"I love these tombs (withdrawing from the arch of Victor Emanuel, we followed the curve of the Pantheon, regarding the other sepulchers), and it is a strange sentiment I experience here; rather than admiration, a proud joy possesses me, the serenity of one who was lost and has found

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his way again. If you knew the thoughts that always crowd upon me in this place! I think perhaps —— ”

I said no more. Repeating these words over now to myself, I am surprised that you probed their proud and wild meaning. And that you did I was made aware by the sudden darkening of your eyes and by that cold sternness in which you vest yourself as with a cuirass whenever you suspect rivalry in your pride.

But I did not know you well then. Confused at my boldness and your reserve, I jestingly asked you if I had spoken foolishly. You gave me this reply: “Quite the contrary,” and the silence that followed seemed sweeter than any words you could have spoken.

From the tombs there came a voice so sympathetic to my heart and you so well entered into the melancholy spirit of the scene, we felt ourselves so close to one another, so in harmony with that King and those geniuses that never, perhaps, as then has the invisible accord of two intelligences vibrated a tone sharper and more penetrating. Yes, I need to evoke you as you then were if I am to continue these confidences. The luminous dawn of a tempestuous period, those first days are not to be forgotten. What boots it that at so great distance your real presence vanishes in a fantastic vision? Is not life all dream? You taught me that good and evil

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do not exist absolutely; at that rate, what is to be or not to be? I see you, I create you, therefore you exist.

Accords.

To know a soul, a heart, an intelligence, and to love it without hope of return, to love it for itself and for its inherent beauty; to enlighten oneself by its rays, to burn in its fires, is not this a proof that one is worthy of that soul? What need of response from that soul? Our satisfaction is in feeling our equality to it.

I wrote this thought, long ago, upon the first page of a book you gave me. (Do you know which?)

It was my habit to note my thoughts beside those of the authors most sympathetic to me, sometimes but a word, a name; it seemed to me in the infinite sadness of my youth that thus I communed with a friend, and I may say that my only joy for many a year were these ideal conversations.

I found in them not a fantastic world, but the true world, the true land where I was arbitress, that country from which I had been torn, before my birth, by some cruelty of fate, my possession, my right. That was the door behind which I heard the battering weapons of my brothers; but how long, oh, how long it remained closed against my ardent desires! And you did not understand this!

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A minute description of the world in which passed my youth, all that petty, prosaic environment, would certainly tempt the pen of a realist. But I know that you despise such vulgar recitals and I myself would sicken to stir again that heap of rubbish in which I suffered too much to have treasured for it either rancor or hate or, I might say, even a memory. I will picture to you rather certain isolated scenes, fragments of my existence, which have survived the destruction of the rest. Truly this is woman's work to unstitch from the ragged canvas of old tapestry some flowers of embroidery. Alas, poor flowers! many of them will crumble in my fingers and not one of them can be transferred to other material.

The Prince.

I have in mind a street, sunny and dusty; a great, excited crowd, a throng of bodies, voices, laughter, all that animal and mechanical confluence which makes me so averse to popular reunions — and I, a fragile, dreamy girl, jostled, knocked about, bruised and irritated — and mute — groaning in spirit, while my companions mocked me; and all about as far as my eye could reach, or my ear catch a sound or my mind a thought, a surging mass beating against me; against my most cherished and profoundest ideals, a brutal shout from a thousand throats: "Thou art alone!"

They had said in the house: "Let us go to

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see the prince." It was the crown prince who was on his way to a military review. It was the first time that I found myself in presence of a form of superior life, of a being really royal and really alive. It seemed to be the incarnation of one of my visions. The prince! This magic word aroused in me a tumult of ideas, confused and obscure in outline, but radiant and mysteriously attractive. The vulgar remarks, the witticisms, the jests which were exchanged among the crowd during the leisure of their waiting disgusted me; disgusted me the stupidly beatific prayers of some, wounded me like swords the bursts of coarse laughter; certain gestures cut in the air descended upon me like blows; sly smiles and certain eye gleams brought the blood to my brow as assaults against my modesty. All seemed gay, satisfied, stimulated by the curiosity of seeing the prince, of finding themselves joined flank to flank, elbow to elbow, mixing the unconscious instincts of their carnality to the somewhat cynical merry-making in their brains, each one feeling strong in the force of the others, in the spirit of the others, each personality losing itself voluptuously in that morbid self-oblivion which holds the masses as a unit.

And I drew my dress close about me, striving for a current of air between me and them, shrinking from contact, trying to isolate myself a little by stopping my ears with my fingers.

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Every little while from the end of the street a shining helmet sent a quiver through the crowd: "Here he is! Here he is!" Then I was possessed by a curious sense of bitterness, a sob, a swelling of my throat choked me. If the prince should look at me! If from above that thick wall of heads with his eagle eye he should recognize me!

My agitation grew from moment to moment; it seemed to me that the greatest event of my life was about to take place; my heart beat, perspiration bathed me, and yet my hands were like ice.

Three or four times the crowd had cried, "Here he is!" without any one appearing. Finally a little group of horsemen arrives. It is he! That is he!

All stood tiptoe, gazing eagerly, all excited, electrified, attracted to one point. Then I was moved by a contrary sensation, and a most strange one. I remember well that at the very moment that the horses' hoofs beat the ground before me, although I too had stood upon tiptoe, yet I fell back and lowered my eyes.

A respectful silence for an instant dominated the crowd, a more rapid pulsation of my heart, almost a sense of suffocation, a shout: "Long live the prince!" He was gone.

Then raising my glance, I saw the white plume waving upon his head and rapidly disappearing. The crowd dissolved suddenly, chat-

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ting, commenting, light, ironical, merry, forgetful.

I should tell you that I slept badly that night, that the day following my heart was full, mortally sad, and that for a long year the prince *who had not looked at me* mastered all my thoughts? And I lived, in this dream, hours of delicious folly, imagining plots and conspiracies which I should discover, risking my life to save my hero.

You will agree that for a first love this was no common affair. It filled that need of exaltation which in my struggle with destiny had saddened all my youth. Immature yet for love, I thought I loved, and did indeed — a symbol, — him who in my inexpert eyes represented the greatest beauty, the greatest talent, the highest nobility, the impossible, the unattainable, my dream! There are words which have the power of substantiating an ideal even when there is no correspondent reality.

Gropings.

You once said to me that you had no antipathies, but more than twenty times I have surprised such in your eyes, in a gesture, in an involuntary exclamation. Give me the pleasure of contradicting you. It is impossible that you are without this sensation peculiar to the superior races. The lower one descends in the social scale the rarer it is, because animalism blunts

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sensibility. You strive to conquer this, I well believe, for the good of others and as much or more for your own, it being a perennial fount of suffering; but you feel it and that is enough for me.

There are a thousand causes of antipathy: stupidity, arrogant dulness, pretension, bad taste; all that seems and is not. Certain smiles (think, I pray you, of certain smiles) with the voice, the whole bearing, the hand (have you ever observed the physiognomy of the hand?) present the most common causes of antipathy. Old women who persist in seeming young, fools who pretend to be intellectual, vulgar souls attitudinizing as exquisites, how can you endure these without pain?

I suffer likewise in seeing a coarse woman tricked out in lace, and objects of art in keeping of a gambler, and riches in the hands of the ignorant and the miserly. *How often have I seen*

And ugliness? Certain uglinesses, ignoble, mean, vicious, cretinous, hurt me like a blow. It is not so with others. In a group of five persons, the sight of ugliness will provoke in one a laugh, in one compassion, in one triumph, one it will leave indifferent and one will be unobservant. I suffer, *suffer*, I tell you. My aunt used to say: "It is not the poor thing's fault, is it?" And how about me?

My sensibility has always been, even in this connection, excessive, and I have not a doubt

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that I have suffered for the pains and the ugliness of others more than they themselves.

My aunt made me learn embroidery from a girl much older than I, a poor lymphatic creature, with great swollen hands spotted with purplish stains, and yellow teeth ridged with green which seemed to leap from her mouth every time she opened it, and as I was not a model pupil, she opened it often: "No, no, not that way; be attentive, smaller points," and those hands, those horrible hands, would pass and repass before me, grazing mine, touching me, so swollen on some days that I could not keep my eyes off them, although sickened by the sight. But, one day when the poor girl, aware of my repugnance, bent her head in humiliation, I threw myself on her neck all ardor, and kissed her and embraced her. She soon grew serene, but how many a time afterwards had I to embrace her, and no one pitied me!

Such were my sorrows, diverse from those of others, but were they the less grievous for that? Or rather were they not doubled by their very isolation?

At the bottom of an old trunk my aunt found a pair of black silk stockings; there were holes in the feet, a red line ran around the hem at the top. She presented them to me and I exulted in the possession, but I never put them on. I thought that when they were worn out — and

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that they would be soon — I should never again have a pair of silk stockings; and if I could not have them always, why at all? The delight of the first moment changed to sadness whenever I took them in my hand, seized as I was by the thought of their frailty, of their ephemeral influence in the satisfactions of my life. I looked at them from time to time and put them away like relics. Never seeing them on me, my aunt said to a neighbor, "She is pride itself."

My aunt formed such cruel judgments which struck deep into my heart, which made me weep as if I found myself wandering lonely in a desert, crying with faint, faint voice unheard of human ears. Oh, horrible case! a voice which *I* only heard.

You cannot imagine how some phrases grate upon my ear: When a glass is broken, "What have you done?" When complaint is made of pain in stomach or foot or what not, "It's the weather;" and when one announces with spasmodic outcry the death of a person dear to one, this question: "When was it?"

But my horror for elegant women you will think exaggerated, those who in following the fashion know neither heat nor cold, nor weariness, nor sense, nor modesty, who bare themselves, lace themselves, torture themselves, fast or stuff, with equal indifference, whence I have reached this

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conclusion, that the skin of an ass stretched over an old drum is the fitting comparison for the white epidermis of a practised mondaine.

No words can express my disdain for those who speak of love while curling their whiskers or of religion while chewing a toothpick, or for those ladies who declare themselves nervous and lovers of music.

And there is something graver in my character which has always exacerbated the wounds of my sensibility. It is the mania of seeking the truth at any cost. To gain this end I have been at times foolish, imprudent, graceless and heartless; you know that terrible aspersion from which you too are not clear. From a heartless person (how often did I hear that in my childhood!) there is nothing to be hoped.

Heartless! what does this mean? Good-hearted those are called who smile at every one, love every one, those who are gentle, attentive and obsequious to every one.

But is that good-hearted? They need every one; hence their goodness. And because I need no one, must I call myself heartless?

There was a time when I wept for every form of unhappiness in the world, if I saw a funeral pass, if a man were ragged and naked to the cold, if a child were beaten, and even if a horse fell under its load, and even, yes, even for the tree stoned by gamins, its branches falling like severed

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limbs. I fancied the tree groaned; more than once I wept at seeing branches stripped from their stock.

One day a hospital litter passed me, carrying a mason who had fallen from a bridge; he was hidden under the white curtains, but his hoarse, raucous moans, scarcely human, could be heard. I was obliged to lean for support against the wall, and I do not think greater compassion could be than that I felt at that moment. However, following the litter with my eyes, I thought how much greater must be the heart of the physician, who, without the quiver of an eyelid, would plunge his hand into the wounds of the wretched man, and I was ashamed of my weakness. The supreme scientists, the discoverers, the benefactors, Jenner and Charcot in their laboratories filled with dismembered animals, what hearts must they have had in contrast with those soft persons who keep dogs on velvet cushions and feed almonds to caged birds!

Compassion, neighborly love, even tenderness toward animals, are not these sometimes altruistic forms of a profoundly egoistic sentiment?

It is the instinct which speaks in human passions as it speaks in the cat which is gentle, placable, affectionate, and cleanly, because otherwise it would not attain its own end, that of living with men.

It is like the "good heart" of those ladies

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who take up subscription charities for the opportunity they offer of display. Vulgarly, vulgarity!

I knew a family most respected for the "good heart" of its component members. There was the mother who bore a great name and was convinced that she combined in herself all the virtues of the Almanac of Gotha and those of the Gospel besides. The elder son, a roué, went to confession because he was "good-hearted" and wanted to please his mother. The second, a consumptive, heard a perpetual hymn ascend for his health, his strength, through the goodness of his mother and brothers. And the daughter, an old parchment creature, was attended by the greatest compliments which can console a poor woman for the lack of all the rest. But why console oneself? I would never console myself.

All the family joined with one accord in this mute service of lies and, all beatification, lived in the most complete density, smiling at one another, exchanging tender kisses, inebriated by their mutual praises; the mother with her virginal air, the first-born with his pompous pretensions of ability, the other challenging the human race between two fits of coughing, and the daughter emotionally repeating, as it were, an accompaniment to the rhythm of her own personality.

I, too, have tried to be consolatory, and have never succeeded in my efforts. I said to the sick:

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Look at the suffering in all this world, infinite, greater than thine, inevitable, obedient to an occult will. He replied: "What are to me the sufferings of others? I feel my own."

I said to the weak and weary disheartened by the struggle of life: "All this is transitory; it is but a trial; one day you will marvel that you were cast down for so little." And he replied: "The present only has value."

And a hundred times my arms fell helpless, and, full of dismay, I asked myself what divided me from my neighbor and why we could not understand each other. I would blush to offer a lie as comfort; it seems to me a derision, an insult. And yet this is what they wish, what they love, what they give with great zeal that they may receive the same again; for, prodigal today of ignoble words of adulation and blandishment, they unconsciously feel that tomorrow these will be spent upon them again: and if at the moment of pronouncing them they feel the insincerity of the words, when they listen the tone seems altogether another.

Thus one day a lie for good-heartedness, another day for egoism; today, not to offend the pride of a friend, tomorrow another, not to crush his weakness. There is some effort in the lie, but the reflection that it is due to friendship, or to prudence, or to social duty, makes it almost a virtue. Once having gained this point, this logic

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soon enlarges its borders, and having exercised its powers for others, we feel justified in employing it for ourselves.

Evidently, I reason too closely, but to love truth, and to suffer for it and to sacrifice oneself to it, is this to have a bad heart? Perhaps I love ideas more than persons; this may be, but prove to me the superior worth of persons. From the deep pool, the stagnant waters which surrounded me, I looked around, and what could I do? I hoped to find unexpectedly some revelation, some path, a ray, perhaps a voice, who knows?

Religion I knew only in the petty practices of my old aunt. Boiled eggs on Friday, anchovies on Saturday, the rosary every evening, and confession once a month; a squalid wooden crucifix, often kissed by my aunt, was my only and repugnant symbol of a religion I did neither love nor understand. And yet I had a lively desire of God and sought Him again and again with eyes upraised to the limpid night. But what God did I seek? Who could declare Him to me? Where was He? I know that once while gazing at the stars I was overcome by a tenderness so profound, so devotional, so mysteriously sad that my face was wet with tears; seeing which, my aunt cried: "Simpleton!" and then added, "Say a requiem for your poor dead."

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Discords.

I remember, also, an old man whom my aunt obsequiously called Signor Professor. He was a neighbor of ours and as he always had some books on his big table and spoke ever of instruction, of culture, of wisdom, I felt myself drawn to him by a vague hope of light. I did not dare speak much, for I was timid and too much constrained by my humble condition, but I listened to him eagerly, and with a certain pulsing in my veins. I expected from one moment to another that he would utter some sublime word, and in this attitude I trembled.

One day finding me more than usually thoughtful, he had the goodness to interrogate me. What a commotion! What could I say? And how should he reply? Blushing deeply, and with drooping lids, I confessed how distressed I was not to know what in this world was *truly true*.

The professor burst into solemn laughter, which instead of disconcerting me, suggested very suddenly this doubt: "Perhaps you are not yourself true"; and then I had the courage to raise my eyes and to look him in the face.

"Well," said he, struggling to recover his seriousness, "virtue, knowledge, good and evil are true things. There is one other truer still and that is arithmetic. Do you know, child, that two and two are truly four?"

I replied that I had been told so but that I did

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not know, and this reply, which might have seemed a profound repartee, was naught else but a candid confession of my ignorance.

A few days after, the professor took me to a manufactory, where in a long row a great number of machines were turning, puffing, whistling. Bending to my ear, he said ironically: "Behold truth. These machines which never make a mistake, which regularly fulfil their functions as if they were living beings, are precisely the fruit of that superior science that begins with two and two are four."

At this very moment the workman who was guiding one of the machines exclaimed: "It's stopped; one of the wheels is broken." The professor at once understood the accident, but did he also understand my glance, immovable, filled with sadness, fixed upon the machine which turned no more?

And for a long while I believe that I did not love nature. Except for the momentary revelation which I had that day upon mounting one of the hills of the Versa, the trees, the mountains, the heavens were for me but the cold and monotonous scenery of exasperating excursions.

We went in companies of four, five or six, as many as could be gathered together, furnished with something to eat which must be guarded during the whole expedition and which was the

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real object of our setting out. We walked in procession at each other's heels through narrow paths bounded by hedgerows, keeping our eyes down to avoid the dirt of the path and obeying directions sent back from the head of the file: "Turn to the right; keep to the left."

Upon the dusty breadth of the highroad, however, the company disposed itself in flank, and, if I delayed a little or advanced, my aunt's voice soon called me to order.

A cup of black leather, cracked with long use, circulated from pocket to pocket, from hand to hand, from mouth to mouth, profaning all the springs which issued by our way. I remember how I longed for a voluptuous draught from the pure source itself, my mouth in the delicious freshness; but one day when I risked this delight, my scandalized aunt cried out: "How dreadful! You drink like a beast!"

Little by little there overcame me a deep loathing for the straight paths, for the crystal streams filtered into the black cup, for the shadowy levels defaced by empty paper bags and chicken bones, for the numberless tiny meadowlands, for the jasmine hedges, for the golden buds gathered for button-hole adornment, for the heads of chicory from which opened like clear blue eyes the dear flowers which I had so loved, and which I detested from the day I saw them pranking above a salad. Then all the popular songs, amorous or

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patriotic, sung in chorus under the trees, put a climax to my sadness. It was then I learned to *weep internally*.

Once I had a compensation. Stirred always by the impulse of flight, I profited by some distraction of the company, occupied as they were in eating, to withdraw myself, were it only by a few steps, and on such occasion under the thick cover of a plant with earth-bowed branches, I discovered an apparition so delicate that I am even now moved by the pleasure of the remembered vision.

It was a group of flowers I had never seen before (crocuses?) — without stem, and leafless, springing one by one from the ground, bare and white, with a whiteness fleshy rather than diaphanous, coloring to a pale lilac, the long slender calyx opening with exquisite grace. These noble flowers gathered in sweet consort and protected by the branching shade seemed to me aristocratic dames in dignified repose, or sad and gracious poets escaped the throng and in close covert from touch or observation.

I repelled the temptation to pluck them as a brutality. Lightly, lightly, it seeming almost as if I should disturb them, I kneeled down, and then sliding along my length in the sward, I lay outstretched with my face close to them, looking, looking, only looking at them.

Were they flowers indeed? Need had they

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of this secluded solitude, a solitude complete, for not another plant was near, all shut out by the green curtain of this princely retreat. Did those frail lilac forms breathe out a perfume? No, rather than the rude sensation which we associate with such a word, there was a fragrant sweetness of purity, almost the emanation of an intimate essence far too delicate and spiritual to be allied to the materiality of an odor.

I lay in a delicious ecstasy of contemplation. It seemed to me my presence was felt and not resented. I counted them; there were seven and two tiny ones hardly yet above ground. They were close together, but without contact. I felt within me a most curious satisfaction: here were my people! But even this innocent revelry cost me dear. My aunt reproved me sharply, saying it was not "civil" to leave the company, that I should do as others did and not wish to appear eccentric and ill-bred. At the very moment of this reprimand, a young lady was making little balls of bread-crumbs and throwing them in the faces of the guests, and this did not seem eccentric or ill-bred, but rather provoked laughter as something winningly witty.

My soul! My refuge!

"My mother," you once said to me, "was a superior woman, a profound intellect, a pure heart."

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I begged you then, and many times after, to speak to me of her, which you did with an expansive confidence which remains the sweetest memory of our intercourse. You permitted me to participate in this maternal cult, and through you I knew and loved your mother. The dear dead, whose shroud you lifted for a moment, abides with me, and you — are gone! She makes a part of that inner world of my soul which I call my temple.

I do not know whether in reality or in some dream I have seen a Gothic temple standing in the solitary space of a wide campaign, girded by a woody plantation, tranquil and dim in the interior, lit by the stained ogive windows whose colored rays touched the tombs to a seeming warmth.

Often it seems to me my soul, weary of the world, of life, of my fellow beings, retires within me for repose. Then I find all the sensations of a sacred retreat, a great peace, a sweet and solemn mystery, a gentle gleam of exalted melancholy, a poetic sentiment and a glad delirium of isolation. There, too, from the windows of thought comes a warm and equal light, and in a tender glow my elect dead breathe again and surround me, risen for me alone from their eternal oblivion.

You well know that some must weep in this world, but you have never. You have no sepulcher in your soul, although you go often to

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meditate at the tomb of your mother — that stone which you have described to me and whose inscription the invading ivy conceals from all but you who alone have the right to move the veil from the dear recording name. The nostalgia of grey mornings passed in your village cemetery assailed you often in this sunny land. Once when we were seated beneath the arches of the Coliseum — do you remember? — you said to me: “You do not know what it is to think of a distant tomb.”

The sad certainty of your tone, wounding my pride, precluded any reply. But listen to me now. Do you know what it is to think of an unknown tomb, whose very existence is doubtful? Can you conceive that profound, that maddening sorrow, not to know, not even to hope to know, of whom you are begotten?

Oh, all that you told me of your mother — her caresses, her anxieties, the prayers she taught you, your little hands clasped upon your crib, her injunctions to be good, to be just, to be great; and that book in which she noted from day to day your progressions; and the little museum of your tiny garments; the first baby shoe, the first glove, and those sweet eyes fixed upon you, watchful, loving, protecting ever, and which follow you across mountains and seas, breaking the bonds of the grave! Even that sepulcher I envy you, that spot of earth, that short stone

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over which you may say, weeping, "Here lies my mother."

I have nothing.

When at last she died, the old woman who called herself my aunt, died unexpectedly, the neighbors said that she herself did not know who I was. She had taken me for a certain money compensation, and as I gave her no trouble, was rather an aid and a companion, she had persuaded herself, as it were, that we were related, but either because of limited intelligence, or of ignorance or of indolence, she had never taken the pains to acquaint me of this mystery of my birth; and the atmosphere that pervaded me was so unfortunate, so low and so destructive of all ideals, that I myself had never felt the need to know more.

The death of the poor woman awakened me as from a heavy, troubled dream, except that to dream one must have lived, and with me life had been only a dream.

Who was I? Whither was I tending? What should I do? Think of these three problems given to a girl of fourteen years, alone in the world. The first night I wept; the second, I did not weep but I did not sleep. Betimes the next morning I followed the bier of the stranger who had shared with me her roof and her bread. Once more at home, I seated myself amidst the few movables which adorned our three rooms and

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gazed at them in a kind of stupor. They assumed a new aspect to me; it seemed I had never seen them before.

Would not that armoire open unexpectedly, and would not some shadow rise from the hollow of that green armchair, or issue from the mantel mirror whose shining surface reflected the clock — the clock, the only living thing near me, what company it was for me in those first hours! The hand moved slowly around at the feet of a lady leaning against a column with an amphora in her arms, and the voice of the inner mechanism lulled me like the rhythm of a cradle-song.

A neighbor came to take me to her home. I passed several toneless days. A black veil was wound about my neck and black earrings were hung in my ears, and I made mechanical responses to a quantity of requiems. Then there arrived some persons whom I did not know, who made me write my name and who examined all the dead woman's belongings.

It appeared the good creature had lived on a pension, which ceased immediately upon her death, and likewise that all the furniture was to be sold for my profit, since I heard them talk of giving me a profession. So I was put in a convent, where I remained a little more than two years, when I was taken out by a lady to be companion to her daughter.

During this interval I had experienced a com-

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plete evolution of thought. As long as I believed that I belonged to the family of the old woman with whom I lived, the humiliation and the sorrow of being in continual discord, in an unspeakably painful straitness of means, had compressed every spring of my organism. I felt myself a prisoner, and like many prisoners I sighed for liberty without any design of flight. Whatever my instincts, the discipline to which they were inured promised nothing but complete atrophy. How could I find energy to rebel against a past of traditions, of prejudices, of ignorance, manacled as I was by my own ignorance?

All this changed when I knew that I belonged to no one, and that the past was mine, exclusively mine, as was the future.

This great responsibility fallen thus unforeseen upon me, and the first numbness of the blow having ceased, the austere and penetrating melancholy of my environment revealed me to myself. No longer was I the daughter of a vulgar and degenerate race, reduced to a life of mere instinct. I was I, that is, a free force, an absolute will, an integral consciousness. Even the dark cloud which hung about my nascence, far from vilifying me, gave me at certain times a kind of exaltation. I saw within the gloom sparkling points of gold to which my fancy attached mysterious filaments.

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Who would ever tell me whose daughter I was? But is a name really all? I feel that I have a noble ancestry, a scale ascending toward the highest human ideals and all these germs of good have been transmitted to me. What imports the name? And what are riches? Whoever you are, grandparents of my grandparents, I bless you!

There is a friend dearer than a brother. What are relatives? Whom can I so name? Suppose our relatives are clownish or malicious, must we then love them, and why?

A stolid mother gives birth to a genius, a man of genius finds himself father of an imbecile. How much of him is in that son and how much of others whom he never saw, never knew of, never loved? Is this flesh of flesh, spirit of spirit?

Of what sum total of ill-assorted unions is this fruit which he thinks all his own? Uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters-in-law, cousins, what are these but fortuitous combinations of our life, independent of our will?

Like names, like interests, like customs, do these, perchance, constitute the union of souls? And, after all, of what importance is such union?

My relatives? Why, they are such as I love and choose, not those who are imposed upon me. Who are you in the eyes of the world, Lawrence, but a stranger born under a heaven, oh, so far

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distant from me! But shall I declare the world right? Shall not I rather say that the world knows nothing of the links that bind soul to soul quite apart from the social compact, from every sentiment of gratitude?

When I encounter one who loves the grey mists of winter; who prefers the green depths of a thicket to the bluest of seas or the most golden of suns; cold to heat; to external life, reflection; to music, silence; to color, shadow; to action, thought; then I say this is my relative. When I encounter one who lives in his soul as a priest in his temple, serving and adoring the mystery of his office, there is my brother. But when he appears who opens to me the supreme beauty and the supreme good of this recondite sanctuary, he will be truly my comrade. Who will deny me this? In name of what law, what right? Elective affinity is the most worthy of man, the only one in which he can engage his whole contingent of intelligence, of learning, of experience, of desire. Great is the compass of a love which says: In all the amplitude of the world, from among those near and those far, through all the obstacles of time, of space, of men, I choose thee.

The Convent.

The two years passed in the convent were most sweet. It was a new prospect opened before me, with its daily instruction, the books, the lofty

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speech of the sisters, the order, the silence, the restraint, somewhat rigorous, but in no way repellent. Even in the pale, shadowless light of the corridors, in the garden enclosure, in the retired chapel, so silent, with its altar-cloths of white velvet fringed with silver, I found an ambient sympathetic for my dreams.

The sisters, either very indulgent or little observant, gave no heed to my abstraction; the truth is I did not always recite the obligatory prayers, but an inarticulate oblation must have issued from my heart and risen to God in those dear hours of mystic preparation which have left a pure white ray in my inmost soul darkened by so many sorrows. No longer did I ask myself "What shall I do?" but within me there was a vague conviction that I should do something.

I was surprised to find myself always different from those about me. The simplest and most common objects had for me a secondary aspect; words changed often to living, concrete things; I made animate not only form but idea. My imagination was so alert that without an effort it transformed the convent garden into a kind of Elysium, a fanciful and primitive world as yet uninhabited by man. The shadow of a group of three plants was enough to make me believe myself in a primeval forest, the yellowing apricots seemed to me the golden fruit of the Hesperides, and the subtile spider threads, pendulous

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in the sun's rays, I really believed to be the locks of dryads or of nymphs, fluttering upon the breeze.

I remember a hot day in August, the whole school depressed, cross, and overcome by the stifling air which even in the wide hall seemed to weigh us down. I can yet see the streak of yellow light which pierced the fissures of the curtains, I feel the hard bench, the numbness of the limbs from the enforced immobility, and I can yet hear the monotonous voice of the sister as she reads the lives of the saints. At one point, where occurs the description of a grotto in Thebes, this sentence made me thrill with pleasure: "There issued from the rock a spring of freshest, purest water," and for an instant the heat, the drought was gone and I was happy, transported to that delicious region of stream and mountain.

So little was needed, for my imagination conquering reality, I almost felt the cool water plashing about my limbs and gurgling in my parched throat. I said this to my neighbor and she bantered me many a day after.

O the fascination of words! Do you remember those written upon the façade of a little church in a hidden quarter of a city dear to us? "*Ascendit quasi aurora consurgens.*" How we loved them, do you remember? How our lips pro-

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nounced them one by one, deliciously, caressingly! Your voice had a profound note of sympathy for the first, *ascendit*, and I repeated with a warm and tremulous sweetness the two following, *quasi aurora*; and it seemed to us that we really were uplifted with the rays of the morning.

That ineffable joy of enjoying together, with the same soul, I had never had till I knew you. X

In my prayer-book, however, there were phrases which particularly touched me — a version of the *dies iræ*, which begins: "*In quel di che le Sibille*," and a canzonet of the beatific Alfonso de Luguori, "*Selva romita e oscura*." I repeated them for whole days, carried away by the mysterious harmony of the syllables, the mysterious signification of the symbols. And for this, too, I was a mock to my companions.

We all have a great number of cherished fancies; for the larger part of girls these are toys of the imagination, for one a sacred object, as a complement to prayer or other rites, and for another a means of surpassing her companions. Each of these was to me the revelation of a world. I remember St. Francesco Saverio preaching to a crowd of savages; they were rude faces, badly drawn, yet in the diverse expressions of the faces I read the avidity of the new word and the ardor of his mission in the saint who in stature dominated all, girt about with the brown tunic which contrasted with the feathers and other orna-

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ments of the savages. I remember a certain ethereal evanescent Madonna, and certain angels who guided souls through flowery paths, which aroused within me a passionate tenderness, and a longing for those unknown spheres to which I was drawn not by ascetic temperament, but rather by a lively fancy and the irresistible thirst for the beautiful.

Above all I was attracted by a little image, the gift of the Lady Superior, a delicate relief representing a youth kneeling upon an empty cross in the midst of a sublime scenery, his hands and face uplifted with such an intensity of desire that, forgetting the subject altogether, I was enrapt by the mystery of that sad adoration, and could never let my glance fall there without the most violent commotion. For a long time I loved that youth, knelt beside him upon his cross, lifting as he my arms to a dream distant and divine.

Yet another picture — the butt of my jesting companions — was a cage, a simple cage containing a little bird and above it a flaming heart. The crude design, and yet the extraordinary ingenuity of the whole, was far from provoking mirth in me. I saw a being imprisoned by one greater than he, and the symbol made conquest of the form; materiality dissolved into ideality.

This vision, evoked by so miserable a representation, struck measureless depths in my mind, a

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succession of scenes at once ardent and spiritual, a whole phantasmagoria of latent desires, of incomplete thoughts, of fevers, of discouragements, of researches, of expectations, of strange clairvoyance involved and impeded by dense shadows, all which broke my speech, made my eye glassy, my hands moist and icy at the same time, a real state of nervous excitement not new in me, which my poor aunt declared a sign of *worms* and which under her régime was always cured by a dose of absinthe.

In the quiet Sunday vespers which my companions chose to spend in chat and walks I waited for a furtive visit to the chapel, and if I found myself alone there I exulted.

I was not very religious, mindful of the narrow rites practised by my aunt, but a sentiment of profound respect for the mysterious, a serious, solemn sentiment made me love the majesty of the temple. The solitude of God seemed to me a thing so lofty and divine, the true state of perfection above the world and all its pettinesses, so that the adoration which found no issue at my lips made the depths of my soul its humble place of attitude.

I was not an artist, nevertheless the frescoes of the arch, the thirteenth century virgins surrounded by angels, guided by patriarchs under a roseate heaven which time had here and there discolored, giving a transparent and dream-like

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quality to the painting, — all this was to me invincible attraction. Certain white diaphanous arms, certain faces of the saints, certain tempestuous folds of the tunics which issued from the cornice invading the pilasters, all this world of inanimate personages I vivified with my imagination and I loved. Here was no strident affront. These beings were as silent as I.

Certainly I was not a poet; it would have been impossible for me to write one line of verse, and yet I heard in my brain a harmony of sounds which disturbed me deliciously, and which, I think, some one could have put into measure. The fresh roses of the altar, with their delicate odor and the ivory-colored linen, gave me an intensity of delight; with my eyes I followed enchanted the metal lacework of the lamp, the tabernacle incrustated with stones whose changing tints were reflections of the mysterious Orient whence they were taken. The sun's ray, which penetrated the narrow window, sweet with the song of birds, played lightly about the azure curtain before gaining the interior of the chapel, and brought with it the joyousness of the fields toned by a sentiment more intimate and more ideal. But what did not please me in this sacred refuge when I could be there alone? The impression was very different in company of the other pupils.

I had asked them one by one and all mar-

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veled at my enthusiasms; the greater part did not know what was painted on the wall; they all agreed that one must go to church to say prayers, but there was no diversion in this, so that they found compensation in whispering together, and trading pictures from their missals.

By force of observations and deductions I began to doubt if even the sisters, the good and pious sisters who so methodically adorned their chapel with roses and laces, measuring the nave with their tranquil step, eyes abased, chaste hands on scapulary — oh! so good and pious — whether even they understood or felt in the ardent way I did all the poetry of the Invisible.

Whither goest thou? Who calls thee?

Ardor, a reserved and almost violent ardor, was the characteristic of all my impressions; this excess of sensation is the daily battle I fight, which scourges me at every hour, at every moment, leaving its livid marks through all my being.

It is not true, as has been said of me, that from my youth I cherished the intention of giving myself to the theater. I never thought of becoming an actress till I was one; and I was one without knowing why. Art has this unconsciousness that it walks straight to a point which is not the limit but the means of reaching this. Do you believe the ideal to be an airy and unscalable castle,

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or not rather a succession of steps ever rising and so steep that when the last is reached the first is out of sight?

Oh, no! I solemnly assure you, into my girlish dreams there entered no luster of the stage and that that day when on the peak of a hill I invoked God as my greatest aspiration, I knew not myself what I desired. Was it love? Was it glory? Perhaps something more than these. My longings were boundless.

St. Augustine says: "What I wish, what I yearn for, is to love and to be loved." Yes, but what is meant by being loved? And to love? O deep and difficult knowledge!

Issued from the convent, I thought I loved my new condition, the family that housed me and the children confided to my care. I do not know how I discharged my duties, but I was thought affectionate. My operative seriousness, the justice and dignity which informed my conduct, had their due appreciation.

The new companions thus accidentally mine appeared externally more elevated than the poor woman whom for fourteen years I had called aunt. Their gentle, courteous manners, their lordly way of living, at first impressed me most agreeably. They belonged to that category of individuals who, wishing to rise above their class and not having means within themselves, employ

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the most distinguished physician, attend the most fashionable church, and for nothing in the world would frequent a house where it was not severely prohibited to speak in a loud voice.

I acknowledge that their ideal was not absolutely vulgar, but all my sympathy was gone when I saw them exercise the same zeal in not losing a mass or in not touching fish with a knife.

Education, they often repeated, is the thing most necessary to a superior person, and by education everything was meant in this family; it was the pivot upon which turned all their affections, interests, customs, tastes, amusements, relations, decisions. They admired talent, for that indicated an educated person; they admired music, the sea, moonlight, *i Promessi Sposi*, the "Excelsior of Longfellow," the "Angelus" of Millet. I learned much while I was with them. A quantity of exact and cold data began to populate the vacant places in my memory; I divested myself of gestures and improper phrases, rags of my wretched childhood. There was revealed to me then a faculty which I possess in the highest degree, that of a perfect digestion; to assimilate from a scanty nutriment the best ingredients. In one year I absorbed the psychical material which that whole family had been patiently accumulating through two or three generations of learned pedants; I had sucked all the blood that there was in that pompous display of soft brawn incapable

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of reactionary nourishment; as for me I was like a snake when in the tepidity of the summer sun he invests himself with a new skin, issuing from the old and leaving it to dry behind him.

But to issue from that skin was not easy. I often accused myself of ingratitude and tried to persuade myself that I could not have a better fate. In fact, what was lacking to me? Certain gradual asphyxiations that slowly kill do not give the victim any sense of a want of air; and that death is the sweetest of all, in the midst of flowers, a smile upon the lips, the mind lost in visions.

Sometimes I seem to move in a Japanese scene, one of those scenes painted upon paunchy vases and upon delicate screens, where the houses are transparent, the people incorporeal and the trees and animals fossilized; scenes without perspective, irritating in their lack of shadow concepts, where the storks, stretched out above a lonely plain, glide with motionless, laminate, argent wings through an unatmospheric heaven.

A languorous illness beset me, which they called *anemia*. They said I had grown too fast, which was not true, and they said, too, that I lived too much within myself, and this was true.

To show myself grateful to my benefactors who wished to procure me some distraction, I went into society. At first, because this was new,

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I was amused, or, rather, I hoped to be (truly, it is thought that a cage of canary birds in a drawing-room amuse themselves, and that the dear little creatures keep each other company); but I understood very soon that amusement is not for me; the very word is an aversion to me. In the very midst of an entertainment, when every one else was gay, I would ask myself: Wherefore? And I felt myself solitary. It was impossible for me to establish any kind of communication between me and all those people, men and women. Their language was mine, but they gave a different expression to their words — and how many of these were in flight, from insufferable feminine verbosity, from insolent male presumption — so rapidly darting, circulating, blatant, fleeting — like boisterous winds and as empty. The more the others talked, the muter I grew. I experienced a genuine suffering made up of humiliation and disdain, and even more of profound melancholy. I tried to conquer myself, but in vain. I said to myself: Why do all these people live, move, speak, and not one such as I dream?

The contrasts between being and seeming which had irritated me from childhood renewed themselves on a greater scale, giving me an internal exasperation I am powerless to describe.

When I was living in the miserable home of my aunt I had formed an idea of a world apart,

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a world in which should materialize for me the things I loved — beauty, distinction, intelligence. Did such a world really exist, and where? In the aristocracy, perhaps? I had always delighted in this word, and now that I was already beginning to be called aristocratic with a manifest intention of distinguishing me, I rejoiced and accepted the baptism. The idea of an uninterrupted chain of superior generations seemed to me a great and beautiful thing. I thought then that society should be precisely divided into two parts, and I sought the better one, there to stretch my pilgrim tent. Having no family ties, I could indeed form these by election; no rank intimidated me, and in complete innocence of vanity I would have mounted a throne, simply because this would take me some steps nearer to heaven; to be great, beneficent, saintly, to lift up those about me, what a dream! Or even this, to know true beauty in some one else, true greatness, true saintliness, to prostrate myself and to adore! I made almost no distinction between these two extrinsic modes, if only *the thing* might be. You understand, do you not?

But I was not content with a fraction, I wished the ideal splendid and entire. I reasoned thus: I am beautiful, I am healthy, I am intelligent, I am noble, therefore I please myself. However, my pleasure is not complete because my beauty is not absolute, nor my health unassailable, nor

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my intelligence genius, nor my nobility perfection. But if I could attain to this, I should have happiness — I, in its perfection and omnipotence — that is, in the possibility of diffusing the greatest good and in the increasing the number of the happy. Is not this the noblest scope of life? *Yes*.

Suddenly I decided upon the theater. Was not that my way to console, to do good? Ought every one to work out his righteous impulses in the one way, or not rather each one according to his own means? To give a piece of bread is perhaps more meritorious or more profitable than to give a ray of light, a livelier pulsation, a smile? To nourish the body is a nobler deed than to nourish the soul? When I broke the divine bread of my art to a hungry public who went away happier and better, nobler and purer, was my work wholly different from hers who reaches to the poor clothes wrought by her own hands? Others have wool, crochet-needles and the skill to use them and give of their industry for the comfort of those who suffer from the cold. I have but a soul, ardent, vibrant, and I open this up to those who are cold in their inmost being. I give love, faith, interest, which solaces, exalts and recreates.

Have men ever thought of the good which comes to them from the stage, of the sorrows

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which the actress has assuaged, of the smiles she has enticed, of the new thoughts dropped like seeds in young minds, of the words which have calmed stormy hearts? Verily I say, that when the actress weeps, she sheds the tears of a whole world.

O that heart which throbs with love and hate!

To think how many believe they love who have souls so cold, so impassive! Yet they bestir themselves with art, with poetry, with passion, with idealism.

They do not hate, therefore they think they love.

Hate, behold the great and noble sentiment, the sentiment ideal *par excellence*. Are you not persuaded that Dante and Shakespeare, the two poets of profound and obscure passions, were inspired above all by hate? Ophelia and Beatrice have emerged from a hecatomb of persons and of things which these writers hated, and it is from a stupendous mound of such cadavers angrily trodden under foot that genius evokes its most potent creations. Love knows not itself without its herald, hate. Otherwise what appreciations were possible? To love, is not that to choose? To choose, is not that to prefer one to many, one to all others?

It is like this: We see fling before us a crowd (the indifferent — say the indifferent — but

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there is no such thing as indifference to an ardent soul, — our indifference is aversion). They file, one, two, a thousand, each one wounding some sensibility, tearing away the folds of a jealous veil, accumulating in our hearts disdain, contempt, nausea, until the Elect appears. He appears, and the whole accumulation of hate breaks up and divides like the waters of the mysterious sea at the touch of the divine rod, and from the depths Love emerges, — love, great for all who have suffered, secure for those who have seen, love that is not the innocent flower fallen from the wing of an angel, but a flame that has burned its way out of the soul, love that knows, “a grown-up god.”

My patrons who were on the watch for every occasion to practice the culture, and to have evermore the reputation of intelligent people, took me to see the furniture of an old palace fated for the auctioneer's hammer in consequence of the bankruptcy of its owner. Making a tour of these magnificent rooms, they said: “Poor duke, so good, so kind, and so well educated!”

This sort of sympathy found no echo in me. The goodness, the kindness, the education of the duke seemed to me small compared with the mortification of the great idea which that ruin represented, compared with the compassion I felt for the abandoned house, with all its treasures of

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association, those portraits, those vestments, those long, patient embroideries, those closed coffers, all that paraphernalia so eloquently mute in the noble melancholy of a seeming death. What especially touched me was a framed portrait of the duke when a baby. It was a design in *chiaroscuro*, done by his mother, and had this inscription written in a light and trembling hand: "Love made thee and here Love paints thee." What could be more delicate? And what sadder in the midst of this ruin?

From earliest girlhood, when taste is yet but instinct, and in a time when the predominate style was cold and inharmonious, the style which the beginning of the century imposed upon furniture and apparel, I was drawn by the blind passion of a child to the fragments of great antique art. Relegated to a rubbish heap, there was in my aunt's house a rusty little coffer of beaten iron covered with faded velvet eaten away at the corners, its lock battered, and with two feet instead of four — the two back ones — so that it stood all humble, in a prostrate attitude, almost as if begging the grace of being let live; and this coffer had from me a long tribute of admiration, of desire, of sweet and fantastic thoughts, of legends strange, amorous, palpitating. It seemed to me most beautiful, while every one else called it ugly. I found interesting, too, an "Agnus Dei" my aunt had from a relative, a nun, which

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must have been very old, with its yellow satin and its undefinable perfume of incense and of dried roses, suggestive to me of the fingers of dead sisters; and another thing of beauty to me was a majolica plate, white and perforated, from which my aunt let the cat feed.

All, all these old things, things which had lived and must have known smiles and tears — I loved them every one. And plastic beauty, too, the floriture of the beaten iron, the form of the lock, the woof of the velvet on the coffer, the color of the satin on the "Agnus Dei," the simple perforation of the plate spoke to my eyes the language of a proud art, which was not then the fashion, for which no one cared, and to which was preferred the frumpish arrangement of rigid and angular lines. Ah! I loved antique art too much, with a silent, reserved and isolated passion when it was abandoned and derided, to be able to join the chorus of the formerly indifferent who now are loud in homage, following the fashion, catalogue in hand.

Two or three days before, my patrons had read, conscientiously, reviews and books of art to get by heart how far they should enthuse for Donatello rather than for Luca della Robbia, for Holbein or for Albert Durer, and had thoroughly studied the style of the fourteenth century artists in order not to confound these with their successors; therefore each picture or statue waited

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its meed of praise till the name of the author was assured. The asterisks in the catalogue were needed to heat them up, but steam once on, away the good people went like locomotives, keeping well to the track. They said: "A Raphael, what a marvel! a Dolci, a little effeminate! a Titian, what luxuriance! a Veronese, what force! a Del Sarto, what delicacy!" (O dear picture seen at San Miniato, away back at the left, which the guide, to my consummate joy, classified as "by an unknown artist"! Do you remember it?)

The antique armor, the gigantic cuirasses made them arch their brows with an expression at once of terror and of admiration. The ivories, the Japanese lacquer, the enamels, so delicate in their azure and diaphanous tints, bent them over the glass cases in respectful attitude, while they were tempted to touch, but refrained, being the well-educated people that they were. They pronounced no opinion concerning the jewels; they really did not admire the ornaments, but the mode was too strong a current to pull against. With great care they lifted the cups, the little porcelain vases, and when they discovered two crossed swords or the three DDD they exchanged a look of intelligence not devoid of pride. They discussed the names of the laces: Malines, Valenciennes, Venetian Point? A fan of mother-of-pearl which had belonged to the Princess of

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Lamballe made them exclaim in chorus: "Unfortunate woman!"

The other visitors looked with wonder upon so well-informed a family who spoke so apropos of everything, but all this calculated enthusiasm turned me to ice. Enthusiasm I understand only *à deux* ; three even is too many.

Different friends and acquaintances joined our group, among them an old poet, a young novelist and two ladies. The novelist, very elegant, with shoes so varnished that they distracted attention from the crystals, was turning over a portfolio of authentic papers.

"He is seeking 'material'!" said the poet.

"And you, what do you seek in that table-service?" was asked him.

"Oh, naturally the perfume of the food of the seventeenth century," the novelist sarcastically exclaimed. (The poet had once been a patriotic verse-maker, but, his ardor extinguished, he now declared that the greatest poetry is that of a good dinner.)

The two ladies were looking at a purse of pearl-colored satin, embroidered in pink in high relief, the exquisite work of the great-grandmother of the duke.

"Pity," said one of them, "that it's not full of yellow money!"

"I," replied the other in noble rivalry, "would prefer it without."

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"Who are they?" I asked softly of my protectrix, who replied with great eagerness:

"Two great ladies; their ancestors were at the crusades."

I did not reply, but a deep sadness welled up in me, and the accustomed flame of odium and the usual violent longing for solitude, so that, feigning fatigue, I let myself fall into a big chair, exhausted really by the thirst to be loved and to be understood.

O God! when would this be? To be loved is nothing if we are not understood.

Au temps où vous m'aimiez (bien sûr)?

Do you remember one evening? — I was seated with my back toward the window, you almost in front of me, in a somewhat dark corner, under that French intaglio which represents *L'Orage*, and which so much pleases you.

You had spoken much of the English poets, of their sane sentiment, simple and pure, of the moral force which dominates your country and makes it great above all others. Your so virile voice, firm and sonorous as bronze, still resounded in the quiet room, in the mild evening, and — why not say it? — in my heart. The ideas evolved by you with skilled and certain logic awakened in me a hundred records, sweet, dubious, quiet, distant, confused, among which, like the tuner of an instrument, I sought the key-note. Suddenly,

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a little impatiently, but still very gently, you said: "Do you not know how to talk?" (The night had come upon us unawares, and of *L'Orage* nothing now was to be seen but the floating veil of the girl.)

I bent my head — how well I remember! — a string of pearls about my neck broke, and while I gropingly sought the pearls as a moment before I had sought ideas, I replied:

"It is true, I do not know how to talk."

What did you think of so silly a remark? I well saw that you did not understand it in its profound moral agony. But I tell you now that I have passed my life with the desire of speech. How I have dreamed of some one who might feel as I, think as I, suffer and enjoy in every way as I had suffered and enjoyed, and who should love me as I him, to whom I could say everything. But if you cannot say everything, why speak at all? Do you understand?

So it was, in consequence of the silence of all my youth that by a desperate reaction I entered upon a career in which I should speak, — not in my own words, of which I never was mistress, but in the words of men of genius, of poets, of heroes. At last I could cry out in hate or love, lift a hymn to my ideals, be by turns pure, proud, ardent, submissive, implacable — Phedra, Ophelia, Marguerite.

Do you conceive the joy of unrestrained utter-

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ance before a thousand of people, and of being able to weep deep and loud without offense to our reserve, without treason to our secret, feeling that a thousand hearts weep with ours? Well, believe one who knows, it is a superhuman joy.

I have always acted "The Wedding Visit," putting my heart's blood into it, and will you believe that many regard this jewel of tears as a light comedy, and if its epigrams do not take it is a complete failure! I mean it when I say that my blood goes into the part as I am called upon to express that disgust of love which has reached its limit, which is no longer either to believe or hope, to desire or lament, which, in fine, is dead, dead indeed, for its soul has been taken from it. I have acted all this for I have felt it, oh, so well!

It is not all vanity which makes us prefer our opera to all others. It is because we so thoroughly understand it, as it is, and as it should be. You see, do you not, the disproportion? A great artist is a great lover, and for a lover his own is the only love.

Study is for pedagogues, the learned, the wise; to become artists it is necessary to love one thing intensely, and when that thing is within us we are called egoists.

Critics, however, suggest to me to consult this or that author, and my fellow actors exhort me to go into society so that I may know how

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to render the passions well. I have always smiled disdainfully at such counsel; and when once a novice, beautiful, elegant, rosy, cold, asked me how she should learn my art, I answered, "Weep, if you can, as I do." Yes, I repeat it, there is no other art; weep burning tears, and write and paint and speak them.

They call me proud: it is true. They call me scornful: it is true. They say I do not love my fellow beings; to this you alone could make reply. You know if I love my *fellow beings*.

Which is the bee?

There flourished (the memory of it is still recent) a sweet April, and I was coming through the St. Augustine gate at Bergamo, taking the road to the left leading from the mountain.

I was thinking that you did not know Bergamo, the delicious, and in thought I was showing it to you with all the pomp and majesty of its past, so concealed by fresh and ever-renascent beauty. Your image combined with the intense blue of the sky, with the charm of the valley, with the tender green springing on all sides! Your name rose odorously through the air with the perfume of the elegant glycyrrhiza, reminding me of your phrase "elegance! that rare quality," a phrase which emphasizes deficiency in a great deal of modern art.

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A whole congregation of lofty ideas, yours, kept pace with me, now silent, now loquacious, as you yourself would have accompanied me. Where were your profound eyes? There they were, I saw them; and I saw your mouth with its spiritual smile. My admiration was redoubled, evoking what you would have felt. You would have said (I am most certain), "What purity!" and I would have answered: "It is true."

Above, in the hanging gardens of the wall, below, along the gentle slope, among the shadows of the vine-trellises, along the now rainless eaves, about the windows, within the arches of the abandoned gateways, the ivy and the vine, the convolvulus and the honeysuckle, and in the interstices of the old stones there spread great patches of green and red from the clove-odorous gilly-flower, the ranunculus, the dandelion, and upon the window-sills, jealously guarded, double geraniums of a deep crimson. I thought: Which is the bee? Ants, butterflies, flies, worms fly or crawl toward the flowers, but which knows how to extract the honey, which is the bee?

Upon the deserted road all white and sunny in the midst of the green, a man's step sounded behind me. If it might be You! In my almost hypnotic condition the lines of reality lost themselves in the vapors of dream. I turned quickly. It was a young man, handsome and courteous

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enough not too much to profane you, and for this I was almost grateful to him, and as I had stopped in my ecstatic attitude, he also paused. The shadow of my parasol surrounded me almost like a veil, and across this I looked at him; but I was thinking of you, seeking you, and for a moment he looked at me as if he recognized me and expected from me some revelation. Curious, these glances which sometimes pass between man and woman, laden with remembrances and desires, sudden, audacious, naked, leaving an impression of a confusing stroke, as if from an arrow intended for another and coming whence one knows not. The moment of embarrassment and I know not what recondite curiosity could not be prolonged. To release us both in some way or other I asked the direction to the Carrara Gallery.

I went thither because I had been told there were three madonnas of Giambellini. O my Master, you see indeed that you were with me! You it was who made known to me this kind of sentiment.

Passing from the white glare of the street to the penumbra of the gallery, every external impression vanished. I had before my eyes, precise and complete, *our* Madonna, her, the true mother of Jesus, so pallid, so sad under her green mantle, her weary gaze fixed in the presageful void, — gaze that saw already the *via dolorosa*, gaze which

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waited, which knew! I had before me that mouth already sealed by mysterious sorrow, that line which cut the cheek, removing every vestige of innocent voluptuousness, so spiritually, so severely beautiful. I remembered the ecstatic wonder which took us both when we saw it for the first time at Brera, and how it was impossible for us to speak, and how we pressed each other's hands in silence, somewhat aghast, you pale with emotion, and I red. And then how, very slowly, and lowering my voice as if in a sacred place, I said to you: "Look, too, at the tiny Jesus. Have you ever seen its equal? He is really the son of that mother; he resembles her, has the same intent and somber eyes, the same mouth which, not being able to express the sorrow of a mature man, curves to the mute plaint of a baby surprised by some great anguish." And you nodded "Yes." "No other painter has even thought of the necessary resemblance between mother and son, above all between this mother and this son. How great this is, is it not?" Again you nodded "Yes." "Look, look, the fruit he holds in his hand is about to fall, and he pays no attention, does not seem to care — perhaps it is a baby like others, He?" "Yes, yes," you said at last, "all this is great. In this Madonna, Giambellini has surpassed himself."

Renewing this scene mentally, I was aware

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done that I found a new sweetness in it. Could it be true that a happy memory is sometimes sweeter than reality itself? The fugitive joy of a moment may grow and endure with the moments which thought adds to it. *X*

Along the walls of the gallery there was a file of the battles of Borgognone, the peasants of Teniers, the landscapes of Zuccarelli. In the profound silence there could scarcely be heard my guide's step — you know mine falls most lightly. I looked for the madonnas of Giambellini with a passionate curiosity, full of desire, sending distracted glances toward the portraits of Moroni which gloom amidst the warm tints of Titian's school.

A beautiful little madonna of Gandenzio Ferrari smiled at me from its deep frame. "It is not thou," I murmured, passing by. I was suddenly taken by two strange heads of Mantegna. What would You have thought of them? This became my keen preoccupation. I felt your admiration; bent over the canvas I saw the shadow of your profile, attentive, serious, and your fine lips pressed still closer in the intensity of your interest. The room containing Mantegna's painting is very little, a kind of cabinet annexed to the principal gallery; the custodian had not followed me — I was alone before the master-piece — so alone that in the ravishment of admiration I murmured: "Lawrence!"

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Exquisite pleasure this of pronouncing a dear name in the presence of beauty!

But it seemed to me — since I felt you so close to me — that your soul, too, had come back to *our* Madonna, so pale, so sad, and more touching and truer than that of Mantegna, greater above all in its extraordinary internal melancholy which had once so moved us.

And I looked no farther, not even for the other madonnas of Giambellini, for which I had come.

“Lawrence!” I murmured again, coming out upon the sunny road which smote my lids close, and underneath them trembled the picture of our Lady of Sorrows.

I make confession. When I conceived the idea of writing my impressions, when the first pages were complete and I saw the work growing under my hands, I asked a celebrated author: “How does one write a book in which one wishes to say everything one has at heart?” The author looked at me smilingly, but with an expression of interest and extreme kindness.

“For whom are you writing this book? For the public?”

“Oh, no!”

I pronounced this “no” so resolutely that he added quickly:

“Since this is so, pay no heed to method.

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Open your hearts as the ancients did the Æolian harps to the shock of the winds and let it sing, let it cry."

You knew this author, and, after your manner, a little loved him. He belongs to no school, lives apart from the world, feels intensely, writes sincerely. I follow his counsel.

The greatest joys of my life I owe to the resolution which made me an actress: I think often of the ancient belief in the fairy donations at the cradle. My fairy, after having given generously of beauty, power, money, talent, happiness, family affections, not finding any of these gifts for me unimpaired, must have said: Let us give this girl the soul of an artist and she shall have rich compensation. Thanks, my good fairy!

We read together the preface of Amiel's intimate diary, and you will remember that passage you thought applicable to me: "The intensity of internal life makes a man inept for his work. A thinker like Amiel has no interest whatever in persuading the spirits or in bending the will." "I never think of the public," Amiel writes, "and I experience a sufficient joy in participating in a mystery, in divining a profound matter, or in touching a sacred reality. To know is sufficient for me, to express myself seems to me sometimes profane."

You often reproved my aversion to activity;

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here is my justification. If I had done, if I had spoken, I should be like all the others.

My success, it must be acknowledged, is due to this intensity of reserve, to this solitary and jealous participation in that which Amiel so effectively calls mystery. From my first appearance on the stage, I have adopted as my device this verse from an unknown and profound poet: *Tous entendront ma voix, nul ne verra mes pleurs.*

In vain the gossipy public and the superficial critic have essayed to discover my individuality in the various characters I represent: I keep guard over my secret, my sentiments, and my experiences. For the rest, there is no human experience which may not be briefly summed up thus: I have suffered, and have made suffer.

Consider for a moment, I pray you, the significance of this most beautiful verse: "My voice shall be heard by all and none shall see my tears." Is not this the secret of those works of art which take souls by storm? The public believes in the story the poet tells, is moved by Marguerite, Ermengarde, Eloise, who have never existed; what matter? What matters the name, the flame is burning and sears where it touches. The more cunning think: In these personages the author has given his own character; and they seek the particulars, the remote accessories, lose themselves in words, in the small involutions of form, ignoring the long and profound artistic elaboration.

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X tion, where from the marriage of sensation and X
art is born a fruit which people may admire or
condemn, very rarely understand, never completely
elucidate. *this is a great truth.*

An obscure little critic/once said: "How well
one can see that you act for yourself!" Did he
intend a compliment or an offense? I never
cared to inquire; however, he spoke a great
truth. Of course, I act for myself; what else
did he think? It is a shoemaker who makes
shoes for other people, the artist works for him-
self. *that is the point.*

I took up dramatic art to satisfy a need of
my own soul: I should have preferred to be a
poet or a prose writer, if such things lay in choice;
I took the medium of those who knew better to
speak to my understanding, not having an under-
standing fitted to communicate to others, and
that I have preserved on the stage the same spon-
taneous subjectivity, that I have never seen my
audiences, never looked at them, nor have wept
or laughed for them, although I have shed tears
before thousands of people, as solitary and dis-
tant from them as though a cloister sheltered me
— this has been the universal wonder. An ex-
ceptional form of sensibility is regarded as ex-
ceptional art, and triumph has come to me so
unexpectedly that I can hardly make it mine.

Such unconsciousness is perhaps the most
pleasing part of an artist's powers, and is that

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X which bears the seal of her superior origin — does it not seem so to you? X

Argument is the language of science, that of art is divination. Young people think it is good intentions, but with good intentions one may transport one by one a mass of stones, but not create one single immortal line nor thrill an audience as I myself did with the cry, "O my Country!" Behold, even now in writing the words I am rigid from head to foot.

My country! magic word! The confines of nations are being canceled, one's country is no longer circumscribed by seas and mountains, but though less concrete, it is not less real. You and I, have we not perhaps a common country though not the same nation? And scattered through the world, unknown, distant, divided, have we not, perhaps, brothers?

The union of like to like is a natural sentiment which no doctrine shall ever destroy. The very anarchists who deny country and family love one another and join with their propaganda that sentiment which they would annihilate. Let words, then, change their post, let the vulgar adopt them; what value have words if not the transitory and superficial one of clothes, which wear out and fall to rags? The truth within them, like the flame of a lamp, is alone invariable. Is it not this we seek?

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I feel I have a Northern soul. Everything attracts me to those lands where nature is tranquil, where little cities rise, ploughed into by quiet waters, where the woods are green and the rain falls often.

I love to think of the old houses, time-blackened, where the walls are thick and the shadows deep in the corners.

The mere sight of an object which recalls the fireside to me gives me an intense thrill of delight, that voluptuous and imaginative delight which others feel by the azure sea, under an azure sky; but not only that, my pleasure is something more intimate, more acute, more obscure, more profound, and if I were not afraid of your sarcasm I would say that cold pleases me because I love heat.

To bask in the sun, the light blinding me and the scene about me distracting, is a pleasure not to be compared with that of watching the rain or the snow from a warm, secluded room. The joy of thinking diminishes in the open and noises lessen its intensity; I do not love nature in parade nor a city in festal array.

The sun, you must admit, is a little vulgar. It clothes us and nourishes us, and this is well, and I am very grateful for it, but I prefer to eat without seeing my cook, and when I dress, the presence of my milliner annoys me. I do not say I am right, but this is how I feel.

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Love me when I am dead.

* I have just come from the cemetery where I have been thinking of your sympathy for these melancholy and fascinating places. Do you remember a certain time? We had gone to look in an old abandoned graveyard for the tomb of a Russian girl who had died in despair of her ideals. We did not find the tomb, and, a little disappointed and even vexed, we were returning amidst the crosses.

It was late November. From the grassy plots, from the marbles, from all those forgotten names, from all those hearts which had ceased to beat, from those sepulchered dramas closed in the irony of eternal peace, a cold moisture rose and descended from heaven in a subtile fog, transparent, still, yet about to fold its draperies more densely like a weeping figure of sorrow. In silence I took your arm and pressed close to your shoulder.

Do you remember?

You said: "How lonely the dead are!"

I cried out almost in pain: "No, no, do you not see the love of the living follows the dead? Are not we here?"

I saw you compress your lips as you always did when I pleased you, and then we plunged into the fog.

Above us brooded the enchantment of that first day of winter; we felt the poetic charm of the grey light, of the closed-in sky, so deeply

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spiritual, so fit for silent souls. Unsought there came to our minds verses toned to pallid faces, to phantasms evoked from the shadows among the dead branches of the trees, where the eye rested with such profound quietude that sense seemed to resign its place to thought. A peace not of this earth took possession of us.

Before an antique tomb almost hidden by the tresses of a willow, we stopped, both at once, as often happened to us; and, as so many other times on the point of pronouncing the same word, our glances divined it together. *Together!* What a rapturous thing when this is spoken of the soul!

Do you remember? Do you remember?

And today again it was your unforgotten face that I evoked from the weeping willows of that village cemetery; it was to you I would have spoken, it was upon your breast I would have wept. I sat down near a small hedge of myrtle surrounding the grave of a baby: the myrtle erect, sharp, resistant, always green, strong, and pure, tolerating no other vegetation near it and flourishing in dear little white roses. How like you!

I gathered a branch of this myrtle into which, perchance, had passed something of the innocence of the child, and I thought that life and death may have occult channels by which an

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uninterrupted current of sympathy may flow to us from those who are no more.

I have heard many times that there is nothing permanent in the poor art of actors. But among these surely there are passionate souls whom we still love, and whose voices, hushed for centuries, have left an echo which reverberates from generation to generation. Souls are not the property of the bodies which contain them. When they are grand, they have within them the treasure of all consolations, of all loves, of all aspirations, and from every part of the earth, whatever the distance of time, little needy souls rise and fly to them like flocks of wounded birds.

Beside the record of virile genius for which immortality is expected, passionate feminine souls live, too. I know and *see* that burning flame of passion which was Desclée. Painters have preserved for us her pensive profile; biographies have described her to us as pale, with great magnetic eyes; Dumas, who had the good fortune first to discover her unusual gifts, says that he received the simple country girl dressed in an old-fashioned green gown and followed by the old nurse, who never left her; they tell us no more.

But I remember a lady who had attended all the performances given by Desclée, in Italy, and when near the grave she was still all animation, her eyes sparkling and yet tearful when she spoke of the actress.

Did not the ⁷⁶ passion of
Bouché's pass into my soul
then to make me for ever
It is easy to make it my

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That animation and those tears were not in vain, because the passion of Desclée reached me through her. And why may not I transmit it to some one else? This is immortality.

Ah! that invisible breath, genius or sentiment, passion or thought, which remains after the dissolution of the flesh and awakens, without any material aid, so ardent a sympathy, is not that a proof of the superiority and immortality of the spirit? Besides Desclée, how many unknowns I love! — a great distant family of congenial ones who are my sisters, whom I have never seen and never shall see.

And to speak to the soul! To think that when my body lies under the sod, my voice shall still vibrate, and that I shall be loved, and that I shall live, shall live in all the loves to be, in the great new ideals which shall enlighten the earth, shall live always, as long as passion stirs the heart of man. No, no, the dead are not alone.

Who has not been happy one hour in his life? But what is this fleeting happiness? (In the joy of the moment I have always panted for infinite joy.) The clock goes, goes, goes, and that continuity of movement surprises and attracts me; but a blow, a change of temperature stops it, and I think that the beauty of its mechanism is but relative, since it depends upon the resistance of brute force. I seek that which is lasting, which ends never. The immortality conceived

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by paganism for its heroes, the second life promised to the Christians, do they meet this great need? Nothing is really beautiful, nothing is really true if it ends; but believe this, too: nothing which is truly beautiful ever ends. How many dead are more alive than the living!

In the hours of the happy past, when you were at my side, and I read in your eyes, and listened to your bronze-like, sonorous voice, in the complete reality of your presence which seemed to promise the culmination of my prayers, oh! then, even then, — and who knows what you may have thought of me? — I silently groaned; this will end —

But now, in the desperate certainty of never seeing you again, when the world and perhaps death divides us, when you cannot hear me, and I can hope nothing, what so ardently dear to me as that which has survived the transitory association of our friendship and that which shall have no end, your thought, your soul, O my Lawrence! Not your brow, which must bend to the destiny of mortals, nor your young body appointed for the worms, You! You! that in you which shall never die, which none can contest with me, none can take from me!

a moment!

About love.

I blush when I think how many I have pleased as woman — only for this; for my face, for my

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form — only for this; I have been loved for my eyes and not for my thought — not for its depth of passion. This I hold an insult to my better part.

How different my mode of thinking from that of Marie Bashkirtseff! She says: "When I suffer I am humiliated." (The more I suffer, the purer and loftier I feel myself becoming.) Is this a form of pride superior to that of Bashkirtseff? 8a-

She says again: "We should not be seen very much, even by those who love us. We should keep to the middle of the road and leave behind us regrets and illusions. Thus we make a better figure and appear more beautiful." Horrible! We are, then, both women, and yet so different!

The sight of passion has always moved me, like the view of lightning, of floods, of volcanoes, or any other great spectacle of nature. Is this not also a great spectacle of occult forces, of that which is within us? Whenever I see a man at my feet, I admire God in the most profound of his manifestations. So great is man in passion! Then truly in him there flashes forth the majesty of whirlwinds and of tempests.

(Even when I could not return the love, I have always had a deep feeling of respect, a sweet and solemn emotion for the new mystery.) It is sad not to be loved, but it is sad, too, not to be able to love, not to be able to respond to an

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affection we inspire, knowing that perhaps it may change to hate.

Many times I am terrified at the evil that we do unwillingly, unconsciously. When a word offends me, I cannot free myself from the memory of the words I myself have spoken that may have wounded too. It seems to me a just reparation of pain, and I seem to feel myself in the equilibrium of nature. The fruits piled in a basket spoil one another, and one cannot say which is the most guilty offender. Is it not so?

There reached your ear the voice of a poet who cursed me because I could not respond to his love. But why do we love one another? O great and melancholy mystery which broods over us, inevitable fatality of suffering and of causing suffering! If love were not a blind boy, he would lead to us the souls made for ours; and it is not so, it is almost never so. We consume ourselves in expectations, in desires, in struggles, in regrets, and love passes by and smiles.

But why do we love one another? again I ask you. We say: I love his beauty, his talent, his goodness; I love his hair because it is black, his voice because it is sweet. But this is not true, not a word of all this is true. I love because I love. This is love's formula; there is none other.

We obey blindly a prophetic law; the proof is that we do not love where we will, and, when

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amorous revelation strikes us, we accuse others and do not realize that we are at once victims and executioners, faithful and unfaithful, mysterious and fatal instruments of a great and guiding Unknown.

Rereading the ardent verses of anger written by that poet, I am invaded by an inexpressible melancholy. What would I not give to reverse our parts! Oh, such a little thing, less than nothing, this transference! If I had loved him, he would not love me now, and he would be the cruel one.

An Idyl.

Has every one had a first love? For amorous passion this must be like the spring of day. Positive people have established the precise hour of sunrise; but before the sun rises, is there not something in the heaven that proclaims the day? It is a light, pale at first, then rosy. Over the earth there is a thrill of rustling leaves, of opening nests, a trepidation of wings not yet extended, a quiver of perfumes not yet shaken from the bosoms of the flowers, — all nature in quiet, mysterious, almost sacred palpitation.

When I was beginning to forget the image of the prince *I had not looked at*, some country relatives of my aunt who had been visiting her took me back with them. Their home was quite poor, even more so than the one to which I was

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accustomed, and they were vulgar people from association with whom I learned that to change my place did not mean a change of my fortunes. There, too, I languished in the midst of low-ordered discourse, mean ideas and wretched habits, getting no good from the fresh air and the liberty of the country, rising always unwillingly in the morning and praying all day for the time to throw myself upon my bed, as a haven of peace and oblivion.

There was in that house a rather wild and unfriendly youth of whom I saw scarcely more than an occasional gleam of big eyes from the darkest corner of the room; I never heard his voice; at table he occupied the most humble place and escaped always before the end of the meal.

One evening, more bored than usual, I tried to get to bed unseen, mounting in the dark the little stairway that led from the two miserable lower rooms to the two upper, but when I reached the landing place I stopped. I had perceived a little flame from the fragment of a candle which the boy held in his hand while he was squatted on the floor, holding on his knees a tattered book in which he was too engrossed to have heard my step.

"Good night," I said at last, passing by him.

He leaped to his feet, extinguishing the candle-end and making ready to flee. I begged him

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to remain, assuring him that I was sorry to have disturbed him and that I would get him a match to relight his candle. This last consideration seemed to decide him. He did not reply, but he stayed; I felt him more than saw him. He was breathing heavily, and the leaves of his book rustled in his hands.

When he had relit the tiny flame — “Goodness!” I exclaimed, “and how do you come to be reading?”

He blushed.

Then I glanced at his book.

“May I ask what book that is?”

I felt that I was a little his superior and I wished to encourage him.

At last he unlocked his lips and said that it was the remnant of an old anthology. I bent over his hand and read:

“Dagli atri muscoli, dai fori cadenti.”

“That is poetry.”

“Yes, the poetry of Alessandro Manzoni.”

“I think I know it, but I am not sure.”

He turned the leaves until he found “*I Sepolcri*.”

“This,” he said, “I like quite well.”

“Do you study?”

The flush on his cheeks grew deeper. Finally he whispered:

“I must work.”

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"But now you are studying."

He did not answer and I left him.

The next day at table our glances met with a kind of curiosity. His eyes were very beautiful. It was then I mentally dubbed him *Stello*, by which name I always remember him. That evening the women of the house took me to a religious function, from which we returned rather late and we went to bed together. But in the few days following, going to bed early, I would find him on the landing and he no longer tried to escape.

One evening he asked me eagerly:

"What does 'the boundaries of Dis' mean?"

I confessed my ignorance. He seemed disappointed, and added:

"I don't understand, either." Then he read slowly from his fragmentary anthology:

"But why do mortals, ere the time decreed,
Diminish those illusions, which, once spent,
Will leave them at the boundaries of Dis?"

We were both mute over these mysterious words. I was the first to break silence:

"This is the poetry which pleases you so much?"

"Yes, but I don't understand it all."

I was not surprised. I, too, loved certain things which I did not understand. Our common ignorance drew us nearer together, and, more, a

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certain I know not what of intimate resemblance between us.

I asked him to let me read the whole poem. He handed me the book, holding the candle-end before me, with his eyes following the lines as I read, which I did neither rapidly nor easily, but from which there came to me such an ecstasy of pleasure that it was like a revelation.

Several phrases particularly struck me:

“ * * * Celestial interchange
Of amorous sentiments.”

And this, too:

{ “To shelter me beneath the mighty wings
Of God’s forgiveness.” }

There were head notes, by which we managed to understand the allusions to Parini and others; however, my friend was troubled over those first three incomprehensible lines, and I was distressed not to be able to aid him.

In the meanwhile the candle-end was smokily dying out. I was remorseful for that portion of it which I had consumed, and running into my room I took the half-candle from my candlestick and carried it to him, saying that I could do without it, as the moon was shining brightly into my room.

Stello was not overgracious; he hesitated a moment, gave me a glance from his wild-like eyes, and said simply, “Thank you.” I thought

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it very pleasant that evening to go to bed by moonlight.

Was it intended as a reward for that little service? I believe so. On the subsequent evenings, when I greeted him on the landing, he always offered me a bunch of flowers. These bouquets deserve a description: very, very small, made up of common flowers, tied tightly by a piece of string, gathered, who knows when, and often withered, they were an evidence of the ingenuous rawness of the boy; from them was exhaled a sharp perfume, like the odor of his person, — a perfume not delicate, nor refreshing, but penetrated by an acid aroma which had a particular charm. I was aware that this perfume came from a little leaf slightly notched, of a modest green, a green almost dust-powdered, a shade common to flowers grown in arid soil. I asked him the name of this plant, and he replied that it was an African geranium, *his* geranium, which he had planted with his own hand in the little garden of the house.

“Would you like to see it?” he asked brusquely. And without waiting an answer, he slipped down the stairway, making me a sign to follow.

A few minutes after we were in the tiny garden, without having made more noise than two little squirrels in a tree. The moon was at full, and in her clear light he showed me the little

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plant. I said it was very puny and that plucking its leaves every day would utterly ruin it.

"What does it matter?" he replied, shrugging his shoulders. "I must give it up."

"Give it up? And why?"

"I am going away."

"When?"

"Next month. They have found me a place as ——"

He pronounced the word in so low a voice that I could not hear. His embarrassment disturbed me very much. I felt a peculiar tenderness for the strange boy condemned like me to an uncongenial life. I was seeking some consolatory phrase when he began again:

"However, I will not stay there always; I wish to be a printer. In a publishing house work will not be so unpleasant, and then I shall read and then ——"

He lifted his eyes to heaven, without completing his thought, and my emotion was too deep to pass unnoticed by him.

Neither of us moved.

The evening was delicious, the garden bathed in light, and all around us such intense quiet and peace, the stars above our heads and so many thoughts within us.

From that evening the landing was somewhat neglected. We often found ourselves by tacit accord in the garden so sweetly illumined

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by the moon; our talks were not long, but it pleased us to be together in silence. Often our glances crossed; always he gave me a leaf of his geranium and I showed him the old ones I had preserved. I showed them to him because then he smiled and I liked to see him smile, for at that moment he seemed happy.

When the day was fixed for my return to the city, I was really grieved. He seemed greatly agitated. He did not say that he loved me, but I knew it well.

I need not say how sad was our last evening. We spoke even less than usual, but every little while we said "Good-by," without a glance. At each little bush he stopped and plucked me a flower which he put into my apron; when all the flowers were gone, he reaped the odorous herbs, some thyme, mignonette, and a little marjoram. All his geranium was gone, though I had opposed this devastation. But he had said resolutely:

"No, no, let it die. It is better so."

Finally we parted, hardly keeping back our tears; my apron was full of flowers, and in my hand I had pressed a little leaf of his geranium.

Once in my chamber, I could not sleep; my bed repelled me. I did not have a room of my own and the good woman who yielded me half hers was already in bed and insisted that I, too, should lie down. I made my little packing an

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excuse for some delay, for truly my sorrow was choking me. Then, when I thought my roommate was asleep, I opened the window, and like a dear consoling friend the pure moonlight unfolded me, and my tears had their way.

After a little, drying my eyes and looking down into the small garden below the window, I thought I saw a dark figure prone upon the ground. My heart began a disordered beat, and instinctively and mutely I held out my arms.

Leaping to its feet, the figure came toward me. Prayers, salutations, impossible desires, what all were not in that dumb adoration. I know not, but my heart beat still more violently. To speak was impossible. I had already heard my companion turn and re-turn in her bed, and I feared she might awaken.

I had to close the window, but first I took a handful of the flowers which he had gathered for me and I began to rain them down upon his head.

Scatteringly there fell upon the night air petals of gelsemine, rose leaves, twigs of thyme and of marjoram, there fell some leaves of the African geranium, filling the moist atmosphere with their sharp odor, and Stello, his arms uplifted, was flooded with the fragrant shower.

This was our last greeting.

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Renunciation.

And when does one really love? Many times, in the evenings of my greatest triumphs, before a theater crowded with people hanging on my words, whose pulses quicken with mine and for me, in that marvelous thrill which runs from stage to audience, when enthusiasm beats its wings, I long with a wild desire for *one* among so many. One only. And it was for him, for the unknown brother, that passion warmed my glance and stirred my voice. Where was he? Did he exist? Have I not been too often deceived? Have we not been reciprocally deceived, and subject all to that natural disillusion, the everlasting disillusion of love?

The hearts of the young are like trees flowering over the high road: upon the first passer-by the petals fall, and the perfume. How gather them up again? And whom accuse of the profusion?

When the spring winds blow, the hardly opened flowers fall, fall upon a dunghill, fall upon the brow of a poet. What merit or what blame in this? Who knows aught of this blowing wind?

Love is sad. *Not ever so.*

Sad above all is taking love up again. To repeat unbelievably the same words which were once pronounced with the smile of illusion, to invite with eyes which have wept, to kiss with

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the mouth which has imprecated, to swear where faith is dead; to be happy and to know that this will pass, to desire and to know that the end of desire is nausea or indifference —

You, perchance, cannot comprehend, O happy youth, this horrible thing, the weariness of love! We are in a green field panting with life, or else in a chamber steeped in mystery; our hearts we feel beating in unison with the virgin energies of nature, or with the refined forces of a salon; one or the other enraptures, inebriates us. We love for the first time.

But let the scene be again either the green champaign with its flowers, its perfumes, its susurrus, its silence, its seduction, or the little room with its softness, its complex penumbras, its suggestive arts of luxury, — it is the second time! And then once more, once more —

The verdure, which is always the same, repeats to us that we are not; for we know that it is not the verdure of that time and that the flowers wither and the perfumes are dissipated and that the traces of tears and kisses in the trembling grasses are destroyed by new grasses, new nests; and from the silken pillows all memories are removed by the feathers used to take away the dust, and, in our hearts, our bleeding and mournful hearts, the science of life has written: *Finis*.

All this is of a sweetness and sadness comparable in my mind only with the song of a child

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at a bier, which is the sweetest and saddest thing I know.

I mentioned Desclée, but I have another spiritual sister in my art, that Adrienne Lecouvreur, whose extraordinary sensibility was perhaps her greatest charm. She had that deep and thoughtful pathos which is so powerful in the interpretation of passion, — a pathos rare and unique which springs in certain privileged souls without any exploiting and in absolutely contrary environments, as must have been for Adrienne the corrupt, frivolous and voluptuous theatrical world of the seventeenth century. She was a shining proof of the theory that there are elect persons who may touch pitch and be undefiled.

There is a sentiment of Adrienne Lecouvreur's which seems to me very striking. It is that directed to a young man who asked her love: "Let us be friends, but for love choose a virgin heart. The happy creature should not yet have lost the blissful illusions which make everything attractive, should not yet have been deceived or deserted; should believe you and all other men to be good."

And such is love. Faith and hope, as in the ingenuous simulacra of our grandfathers, always accompany love. The heart, the cross and the anchor, carved in carnelian, was, fifty years ago, you know, a kind of amulet. They were worn

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about the neck, attached to a cord, and woe, if one were lost!

Love will perhaps disappear from the world. It is a good sentiment for simple creatures, two children who go hand in hand and are credulous. One day this will be no longer possible, I say to myself. Admiration, sympathy, desires, ecstasies which come to thee, fascinations that stimulate, ideals that inspire, take them all with the conviction that they will resolve themselves into nothing. Keep not one small particle of these tributes, render them all back to their divine source. In them there is something really good, really pure, but it is not for thee. It is a loan; it is the circulating coin of the world to be given back to it.

And again I say to myself:

Do not condense thy dream, nor seek to make of it a reality. Thou shalt see in the heavenly vault forms of flowers strange and mighty, angels, flames, symbolic words, but do not try to arrest them, for they would dissolve in cloud.

I was obliged to stop; the evening had already set in. I took a seat at the window, and little by little a superhuman sweetness swelled at my heart, as if an invisible hand had pressed it and brought forth tears of relief. I wept in the coolness of the night, feeling all my sorrows

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present in the shadow, and yet, too, a comfort, a hope, a dawn of peace.

I wrote almost in the dark:

There flower upon my lips
Kisses for thee,
For thine Olympian brow,
For thine eyes divine,
For thee.
But this shall never be,
Nor now, nor in all time,
Shall ever be.

Knowest thou the joy,
The melancholy joy
Of *No?*
An offering sweet I make
Of my inmost desires;
And these I bind
Like fragrant roses dead,
Like sacred candles spent,
And rise,
Thus dearly freighted,
Serenely rise
To thee.

Do you not hear in these words a mute ardor?
And a plaint from afar, which shall never, never
end?

How can I say everything? I did so desire
to, but it cannot be. Oh! if you would divine
me! Behold me! Are these groans, these
struggles, these cries, these lamentations not
enough? Music might express more. You

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understand that. Why not understand me? I *know* — this is the reason: you have never suffered, nor wept, and though your talents will carry you far, you will always fall, always stop before the sphinx which is named Sorrow, and yours will never be the melancholy, boundless, lamentable, made of wounds and tears, the state of him who knows.

One day you had the cruel courage to say to me that I could not love. Lawrence! when the earth enters her shadow you know well that she has drunk in all the rays of the sun, and is warm with them. You say the pure, the cold, the chaste night, but you are ignorant of the fervor she conceals, and that her coldness is modesty, and her chastity is a veil of tears.

A terrible fatality weighs upon lofty and sensitive hearts. They love and are deceived. You see, I endeavor to be scrupulously just. I certainly shall not repeat the vulgar truisms that many have thought to discover, accusing now men, now women, nor even the patent phrases: "men egoistic, proud, sensual" — "women vain, frivolous, capricious." Every one pronouncing one of these phrases gives vent to his own pain and shows his own limitations and egotistic experience.

How can it be said: It is the man that causes suffering or it is the woman, for we are each a planet, and for one turn which we make around

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others how many revolutions have we completed around ourselves!

If we must accuse some one for our disenchantments, let it be ourselves, for it is we ourselves who fabricate our loves, painting with the colors of our fantasy. When our hearts are young and ardent they are like prisms, and lend their tints to the objects that most nearly approach them. The ideal is within us, and we try with all our powers to extract it from some other person. Love is the great soul of the universe, which is eternal in the hymn of life, and we wish to fix it in two eyes which a cataract may dim today or tomorrow and which death will certainly close forever.

Do souls meet in life, in time, in possibility, in election? Really no?

Given two equal souls, with difficulty shall they mutually reveal themselves — interpenetrate each other, hardly. If there is the time, the cause will be lacking; if the cause is at hand, absence will supervene; and when time, cause and presence are consenting, does there not always exist the past of which one shadow is enough to obscure whatever joy? A slight indisposition of the spirit is enough for this. (We have sublime impulses, but no one sees these at their moment, and, called back, their worth is gone.) We would often be heroic, godlike, impassioned, if a thousand little invisible influences did not work upon

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our timidity or there were not awakened that vague terror of action which so easily besets him who is used to a life of meditation.

Last night there was a marvelous moon, moving so lightly in the midst of clouds, lower than they and so luminously withdrawn from the firmament that she seemed to be making with rapid progress toward the earth. A god bearing a message of inconceivable grandeur might look like this. What noble things you would have had to say to me! But could I have spoken to you?

All the difference between life and dream lies in this:

In dreams all the outer circumstances are in harmony with the inner, while in life there is always something wanting — something which is, which exists, but which arrives either too soon or too late.

Then why be so obstinate in loving? Why, once enlightened, renew the deceit? It is good for simple hearts, as I have already said. Wounded and impassioned hearts should be lifted up to where love changes its nature. In the highest atmospheric regions the rarefaction of the air prevents the development of organic life, but the light of the sun is more ardent and purer there.

Fidelity, the elevated form of terrestrial love, is an insensibility to the great love, whose

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principal aspiration is evolution to an ever more perfect type.

The symbol of a dog in his kennel fits itself to the love and fidelity of men, because these sentiments have in them part instinct, part habit, part bestiality. I, for the symbol of my love, would have a star and this motto: "*De claritate in claritatem.*"

He was near to thee and spoke to thee.

In the gardens of Milan (after Rome that is the city where we lived most together, and, after the Villa Borghese, the gardens of Milan are the dearest in the world to me) we stopped once — melancholy word! — before the tiny village of birds. Two splendid specimens of I know not what rare species were lodged apart in a building something between court and garden, like old aristocratic palaces, and their sections were divided by the very closest lattice work. Leaning upon the iron bar, we silently looked at the birds for a while. (How ideally transparent was, that day, your Anglo-Saxon complexion under the Italian sky!)

Every one around us was chattering: the nurses with their charges, the little girls with their dolls, meeting friends, an old man who found himself seated by another old man; but we, no.

Meanwhile, the two noble fowls, separated by their light barrier, felt each other's presence, and

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sought one another. From both sides there were bold assaults, pauses full of expectation, impossible attempts at flight, attitudes of defiance, sweet and disdainful lamentations, and beatings of the beak against the barrier; a whole war, a drama, a poem. Animated by the same fury, the one did not see the forces of the other, and perhaps undervalued these. The one ran the length of the lattice, attracted by the voice and movements of his fellow, the warmth of whose breath he could feel without being able to see or to touch him, and then retreated as if beaten; but the other found the same obstacle, and repeated the same movements, the cries, the beatings, the laments, the dolorous calls, insistent almost to spasms, he, too, to recede defeated and discouraged. They were neighbors, they heard each other, felt each other, and could not love each other.

Why did I not then speak? The heaven above us was so sweet, and mild the air and the hour. I tremblingly listened to the life passing by me, and from the depths of my heart there arose an old song which I love:

“There where the restless waves sigh, night and day;
There where the lark sings, thou hast not met love.
He was near thee and spoke to thee.”

For a moment I was tempted to repeat this aloud; but always when I am deeply moved, a

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kind of timidity or modesty, I know not which, urges me to assume a demeanor at variance with my feeling lest the sentiment should be entirely lost. I said:

"What beautiful plane-trees!"

"Those are not plane-trees," you replied.

"I think they are."

"They are not."

"Then what are they?"

My heart kept repeating "restless waves," and my lips questioned for themselves.

"I do not remember; I will tell you later."

"But they have the palmate leaf of the plane."

(The eye can look, too, without heeding the heart.)

But the music (our brief chat was like rapid archery) did not cover the words murmured in our inmost being, the words we did not speak.

Soon you raised your voice to tell me of a dispute you had had with a friend at a restaurant; your eyes sparkled with boyish gaiety; your voice had the high and slightly emotional quality of one who recites a part; however, you did not proceed. The glorious beauty of the hour took us both; the joy of living penetrated through eye and heart.

I saw you, you, in that inexpressibly pure air, in the light, slightly veiled, like a proud ardor enshrouding itself in the general mildness of tints

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and breezes, which was almost enough to make one believe in a suspension of terrestrial misery, in a happy instant of pardon.

An imperceptible, almost involuntary movement drew the hem of my skirt across your feet.

"What an enchanting day!" I murmured, very softly, not to trouble the sweet tumult within me.

You assented silently with a smile. And meanwhile the hour was passing. A slight coolness in the air was the first warning. From the summits of the trees the sun was withdrawing little by little, trailing its glory along the sand of the paths, granting to the very last its gracious warmth to the little nests, to the holes deep in the grass where, through shining threads, the cicadas were taking a few last leaps, and the mysterious dragon-flies were disappearing with the graceful flight of their gauzy wings. An ever sweeter and gentler whisper thrilled the leaves of the tall trees. I lifted my eyes, thinking, "When the lark sings." But the larks and the swallows were descending in large circles, silently skimming the tops of the magnolias in whose shade we had seated ourselves, — sweet, shining green of the magnolias, a little cold (like us?) and aristocratic, a green which defies the frost!

My fan fell to the ground, you picked it up, and it seems to me that I looked at you with a great and unexpressed sweetness, delaying some-

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what to take it from your hand, while you yourself hesitated to yield it to me.

In that moment of divided sensation I relived in the beating of our hearts all the enchantment of the vanished hour, and it abides with me yet, combined with the fragrance of the magnolias, with the green, with the dying sun, with the warmth of your arm against which I had leaned, with your hand which had lightly touched mine, with the desire which had enwrapped us, so subtle and so secret, — not entirely were we masters of ourselves, nor yet slaves.

The invisible dominated us, surged from our souls to our lips which closed in jealous custody, pressed against our hearts which suspended, almost to finality, their pulses.

I shut my eyes for a moment, and was glad to be aware that even from the lowered lids I saw the sky, the trees, and you. I saw you better without the distraction of secondary objects, as in an ever purer spiritual selection, and in this sweet oblivion my unhappy past seemed annihilated. "This is happiness!" I thought.

To breathe beside a sister soul without merging oneself, with full self-consciousness, to love with something yet incomplete, uncomprehended, is not this, perhaps, the greater charm, the sole one, — expectation?

I had not yet thanked you for having lifted my fan, and it was now too late to do so. Too

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late! I repeated to myself. I drew my black boa closer, controlling a shiver, and rose to my feet.

You looked at me doubtfully, with a dull flame in your eyes. You remember?

The white book.

You saw it once on my writing-desk, the little white book. It was you who so named it, giving a certain importance and recondite sweetness to those poor pages, which I would never let you read.

Many women keep a journal, not I. The book of my life would have so many ugly records that I am happy never to have written it. I must tell you, too, that I do not like to write; I am astonished to be doing so now to you, yielding to an irresistible impulse.

It must have been an irresistible power which made me set forth so many thoughts upon these pages, — thoughts given in so unusual a form as sometimes to be like verse, and in which I find something better than my life, the synthesis, the very result of my life. Yes, it is indeed my life which I have written in the little white book. Look so to understand it; of what import the facts?

Now I love nature. It is almost my only consolation. Everything has voice, every form an expression, every change a signification. The white book knows it. I have made moan with

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the trees and with the fountains; we have told each other many things in a language I once did not understand.

I made no search for the words written here. They came to me already formed, as if suggested by an invisible mouth; they came instead of tears, instead of groans and sighs; they came in unaccustomed throng, I know not why. I know nothing of what I say except that it is what I feel.

In the greater part of mankind admiration of nature has been cultivated, like the need of dressing, like the habit of reading, or of making music. It is my pride to have discovered nature by the mere force of my love.

I did so detest it when they wished to impose it upon me after their manner that now I have a special right to love it for my own, with a passion mute and profound, with a jealousy, too, for this love will admit no companionship. To be alone in the wood is for me the highest esthetic sensation.

It is not the verdure, nor the freshness, nor the shade, nor the whispers, nor the perfume, nor the gay sensuousness of the velvety sward that attracts me; it is rather the meaning of all this, that obscure meaning through which the heart of man has relationship with the blade of grass, with the flower, with the brook, with the insect, and even with the ultrasensible space, with the grand,

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the mysterious, the marvelous, the unknown.
This is what I wished to write in the white book.
Listen:

The Lament of the Little Waterfall.

I was a tiny thread, a slender stream
From high rocks tumbling down.
Silent I fell, disturbing none who passed,
And none took note of me.
One day a stranger saw me, and had thirst,
Had burning thirst of me.
Graceful he bent, took me within his hand,
And pressed me to his lips.
And then he went his way and I went mine, —
But from that day I weep.

The Storm of Leaves.

We are errant voices,
We are sighs and kisses,
We are groans and dirges.
On we fly, we whirl
In the air, the sun,
Over mount and plain.
We are illusion,
We are hope,
We are passion.

The Secret of a Stone.

I am inflexible,
Hard, severe,
Show no pulse,
Voice have I none;
But the new Hamlet
Of the valley,
I have a secret
I'll not tell.

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What I have seen,
What thought,
The wood knows,
And the sky knows, too.
But why, cold, I fell
Upon the river-bed, —
That is my secret,
I'll not tell.

The Voice of the Madonna in the Little Chapel in the Wood.

Thy brow is pure,
Thine eye serene,
Thy mantle azure
With stars of gold.
But seven swords
Have pierced thy breast,
Mother of God
And of Sorrow.

What the Mountain Heights Think.

We are immovable, stony. No passion troubles us. The winds and tempests pass over us and leave us intact. The rain storms down, the snow falls, and we rise ever pure and erect to meet the sun. We see everything, and nothing touches us. (So think the mountain heights, and they reign.)

The Song of the Cicada.

Joy, joy, joy is mine!
Love seeks not me.
Joy, joy, joy is mine!
From thought I'm free.

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Joy, joy, joy is mine!
I challenge sorrow.
Joy, joy, joy is mine!
I know no morrow.

Dialogue of the Roses and the Thorns.

—We are beauty,
—And we are power.
—We are sweetness,
—And we are constancy.
—We are love,
—And we are sorrow.
—We are poetry,
—And we are wisdom.
—We bind the brows of the happy,
—And we the temples of the heroes.

The Trees.

How often when I rest beneath the trees,
Those sheltering trees whose verdant shades I love,
I question of the tremulous leaves: You know?
You know both when I speak and when I laugh,
And when I'm sadly mute, you know me, too?

Yes, yes, they understand me, they alone;
Into their secret depths I searching look
And find serenity's infinitude.
Sorrow they understand, and when a heart
Is wounded unto death, they understand.

They listen, too, they listen, grave and sweet,
As those who all things and for ever know,
All the great mysteries of the human soul.
And tenderly as mothers to their babes
They with their soft caresses heal my pain.

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O verdant fronds and branches! O delight
Of streaming odors! and above all dear
Unto this weary heart, your shadows pure —
To you I yield myself, oblivious quite, —
Sweet is oblivion within your arms!

I feel you are my brothers, living trees!
Trees linked with man in common destiny!
For you are sentient creatures, stirred by mood,
Not solid granite force immovable,
But born like me and like me mortal, too.

Like me you're born to gentle aims, and good,
Your slender arms uplifted to the sky;
You're ever warred upon by wind and man,
Your young leaves' graces ever stripped away
And ever budding new — like me again.

Kisses you have, and shudders, for you feel!
And in the cosmic struggle, in the grey
And desolate sunsets and the gloomy dawns
Of pale Octobers, when the heavens weep,
Your drooping branches have their weight of tears.

And when the awful sea in quiet sleeps
Upon its heap of corpses new engulfed,
Impassive witnesses the mountains stand;
But you with long-drawn sobs and wailings make
Responsive moan, O my beloved trees!

Upon the Shore.

I said to the wave:
Why with such passionate kisses meet the rock?
Canst thou not see it is insensible?
Thy wooing warm,
The gentle words thou'rt ever murmuring
Are lost upon the shore's rude masonry.

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Kisses for roses!
Seek them, for they know the answers fit.
Soft are they, and their petals richly sweet.
To me the wave said:
A great Power I know not teaches me
To give, to give and never to receive:
Human impurity
To touch and still to make me pure again;
Prodigal, noble, simple, all unprized,
I pass, forgetful,
Leaving this precept unto humankind:
"Nothing to ask: to love for love alone."

The Absolute.

That there should be people who do not like me seems very natural to me. To please every one is a vulgar aspiration. What I cannot endure are feigned brothers. These impress me always as one who, having warmed himself back and front at a fire, feeling the generous heat without and within, thinks himself to be the fire, and stretching his glowing hand to the flame calls it sister.

The world is big enough for even those who know nothing of art, of poetry, of beauty, but at least let them not trifle with these consecrated things. It is the only grace we ask of them. There are certain sacred words it is not given to every one to pronounce, which may not be put with others without profanation, words which are revealed in the midst of thorny places to those who brave the pricks for the great passion of the

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revelation. Calm and reasonable people have, however, one compensation. They may call us mad, that is their privilege, and let them profit by it; it displeases us less than to hear them name us brothers.

I am grateful to all who love me; some have known me as child or young girl, others are my benefactors; my inferiors believe me good, and all think they should admire me. They smile benevolently when they hear it said that I am the greatest Italian actress, the only one who has (intuition of a soul) this word exalts them. They proclaim me superior to every one, and no one is worthy to loose the latchet of my shoe; but one little discussion, one adverse opinion, and throne and altar vanish into air. In a few seconds I can negotiate the exchange left of my merit and my intelligence. Is my intelligence to be the fuel to illumine and warm theirs? Their favor costs too dear. I prefer that given me gratis.

This class is more antipathetic, but from a lesser height I am dragged down by enthusiastic youths who have seen in me the ladder of their ambition and come to burn before me the incense of their admiration, manuscripts in their pockets.

The saddest is when I meet old friendships which time has fossilized into the monstrous immobility of the mammoth. We do not understand each other any more, and we mourn with a touch of irony that we have so much changed.

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The faculty of progression is very rare. They knew me poor, crushed under the weight of my destiny, and cannot forgive me for having released myself. They think perhaps that I have robbed them. Property seems always illegitimate to those prud'hommes who imagine the highest ideal to be their level.

And my associates in art? What have we in common? Nothing. Our principles and our aims are diametrically opposed. I look at them sometimes, marveling, without hatred, without contempt, and I listen to them timidly, a little as might an inhabitant fallen from the moon regard us all; *bien entendu* that the heavenly visitant is always in the wrong.

The public? Oh! the public almost hissed me one evening in the second act of *Frou-Frou* because I wore a cheap dress costing sixty lire.

I shall not say a word of the critics. The first, the true critics, are the philosophers, the poets, the romancers; they make the critiques of life. It was only after them that were self-constituted the critics of critics. There might be much said on this subject and it would be very little worth the pains. Here as elsewhere it is the spirit that makes alive and the letter that kills. A true critic is evolved only from a great intelligence. For the rest, the women folk upon their balconies, at the cross-roads or about the well, are time-honored critics.

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All this, you understand, is very different from what I feel when I weep or groan or implicate or implore or pardon from the boards of the stage, beauty and absolute truth in my line of vision. In that moment of intoxication I know nothing but the ideal phantasm of the crowd, the better part, the nobler instincts, the gentle aspirations which vibrate under the touch of art, a divine music from a borrowed instrument.

And may they not be deceived in their idealization of the actress? Perhaps. We are indeed *Æolian* harps which a celestial breath stirs at intervals to music. What may be thought of us when we are found sometimes with silent strings?

Yes, when we are known, the instrument is found toneless, twisted, worn out. Our genius is not in us; it has died away with our voice, with the fire of our glances, with the enlightening flash of our intelligence, with the fervor of our passion, prodigals that we are in our revelation of beauty.

Blessed are those who can embalm their souls in a masterpiece. We, we give our poor souls to the wind.

And I think often, too, of a stranger who may never have seen me, whom I shall never see, who alone and from a distance (whether upon an ideal summit girded with snow, or in a sad marsh mid gray and weeping willows, or in the dizzy

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noises of a great city, or in the austere quiet of an ancient country home) follows my career, my thoughts, and feels and sighs and hopes with me. He — the unknown — has loved me, — I know it, I feel it, across the vibrations of my name, and this pure love which from the frailty of matter can never reach me, is my frequent consolation; it is like the perfume of a flower which I have folded in my gown. I have its sweetness with me though I do not see it.

But I tremble always when one comes out from the multitude to accost me; I know I am to lose a friend. Accepting the grave responsibility of speaking to the heart of the masses, I have renounced the gift of treating with the heart of the individual. The man who embraces me has a phantasm in his arms. My soul, a pilgrim ever, has no home, no roof, — its dwelling is the whole world.

“Why do you come to me?” I would cry to the curious visitor. “The hour I give you is sweet, you pay me compliments, and I believe you, more or less, but still I do believe you.” And then? The visitor rises. “Will he come again?” “Soon.” “Soon?” “Very soon.” A hand-shake, the door opens, the visitor is seen only in profile, he is already distant, he has disappeared. It is all at an end. Months will pass before such another visit, and when this comes the sweetness will be spoiled, a melancholy

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curtain will have fallen upon the enthusiasm, faith will be no more.

And letters, — those letters which are received with all the fascination of the unknown, which are read with an ever-perishing and ever-renascent desire, those distant cities which have left in our memories so many graceful outlines, pure horizons, impressions, regrets, and which rise before us with so certain and sonorous a voice from the chaste mystery of the envelope! Indeed they are a joy. But can one be writing all one's life, — all one's life be at the same pitch of passion? In the evenings a lamp-lighter passes by, lighting the gas-jets one by one. My neighbor, standing at the window, with his head turned to the left, watches with deep interest each flame; when the lamps on the left are all burning, my neighbor tranquilly turns his head to the right. Is it possible to stand all one's life gazing at a flaming gas-jet?

There was in the home of my childhood a cut-glass bottle, with little golden stars upon each facet, which, according to the good woman who brought me up, had been the property of my mother. The bottle remained empty, but of the essence once contained therein there was left so rich a perfume that it was one of my delights to enjoy it in the dark, like a mysterious caress — that perfume which my mother had enjoyed before

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me and which lasted still when she was here no longer. Since then I have sought in vain a permanent essence; no flower grown on earth and strained through a limbec can give an unalterable perfume. The best modern products last a year or two at most; my mother's cologne bottle has had thirty or forty years of life, perhaps. However, now, even it is a little less odorous —

A party of artists and some others were returning from an excursion beyond the walls of the city. Near the gates we came upon a peasant driving a small herd of oxen to the slaughter-house. With us was a novelist, you know the little fat one who talks so much of art and gets drunk so often, who announces every little while that he wishes to set his ladder to the stars, but who is always held down by the weight of his stomach, — well, he seemed deeply to reflect, and then said: "Poor creatures, walking of themselves to their death!" But are we not all walking every day, every hour of our lives, to our death?

One morning in April I had a rendezvous with you in a delicious bit of country; the air was sweet with early flowers, joy awaited me, I was happy; and yet within me I thought: "I go to death; over these stones which my feet lightly tread, other feet not yet created, borne on by other illusions, shall pass, erasing the footprints

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of those who passed before us." I seek them always, those footprints, and question them with reverent curiosity.

Does nothing, then, of the earlier wayfarers survive? Ah! yes, indeed! there live still their joys, their sorrows, their ecstasies, their tears. We are they, a little more melancholy. The sadness which oppresses our young and ardent hearts, what is it but the shadow of their grief? We feel the weight of the ashes of so many dead, and this is why we grow silent sometimes in the midst of joy.

You were awaiting me, no reality could be truer than your smile. You had written some verses, and asked my opinion of them. Instead of replying at once, I delayed that I might take pleasure in your gaiety, not yet quite equal to it, knowing that five minutes of the hour had already run, that time was flying, and that I should lose you. The sadness of many happy days weighed me down, days which one knows will never come again.

The stronger and the more ardent we are, the greater is the power of love within us, and the more we attach ourselves to life. Is this not so?

We love all there is in life, our own part and the parts of others, the future and the past.

Whatever our sensation, pleasure or sorrow, it is one with the joy or pain of the universe.

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We are not to think ourselves the center of motion, turning like wheels and alone upon our own axis; we know that around us, above us, and below us there is a marvelously progressive machinery, and that we partake as much of the dust and the mud over which we advance as of the luxuriant herbage and the triumphal flowers which climb the summits.

This is why we love the dead. Not one of these has perished or is canceled from our memory. Great heroisms, great geniuses perpetuate themselves and resurge under other names. Who do you think was Dante? Dante was Homer. And when beauty is gloriously eloquent in the face of a woman, you think: Behold Helen! Not into dust fell those divine arms, that breast, that hair, those sweetest eyes. Helen lives. Helen shall live ever.

Let us love the past, let us love the future, unless we wish to die. We are the world.

It was that day that we fell into talk about jealousy. I assured you that I was not jealous, a little as said St. Theresa, "I die lest I die." Jealousy is of its nature sensual, and this is why we say "jealous as a tiger or a hyena." But when love is elevated to the great heights of sentiment, jealousy does not exist. We love God and are not jealous of him.

If I were disposed to jealousy, I should feel

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it most for the breast that had borne and had nourished my beloved, and then for the first objects which had struck his imagination — his toys, his baby-clothes, the playfellows whom he first loved; and then for the house in which he lived, the paths he frequented, his favorite poets, his regretted dead, and finally those persons whom he did not yet know, but whom he should know, who should enter and make part of his life, have place in his heart, give him amusement or interest, make him weep or smile, curse or bless. Jealous of a woman? Well, perhaps, for a moment. But what woman could wholly possess him, and forever? Death only — and of her, of her indeed I could be jealous!

But love has sometimes vanquished death; has always vanquished when a supreme genius lends love its wings. Death has laid low the beautiful bodies of Atala and Juliet, love has made their spirits immortal.

Think of Sappho's triumph! For centuries her obscure rivals sleep in oblivion, she only possesses Phaon.

This is my understanding of jealousy: to contest my beloved not with a wretched woman, but with nature, with eternity. Can you conceive anything more sublime? Consider: they have lowered the loved one in the dark grave, they have covered him with flowers, they have recited over him the prayers of the dead, they have given

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him their last farewell, they have said: "He is dead." The mother weeps; the relatives prepare their mourning; friends think: "We shall see him no more;" they are all resigned. But she — that sublime mistress — descends into the sepulcher, takes the body, presses it to her breast, infuses into it a new soul, and, for the frail life lost, offers him an eternal being. He is hers at last, and hers alone! They will soar through the world above all human loves, above all human joys, and posterity — those late-comers — will still speak of their love, and bold or timid youth will repeat with jealous wonder the two names immortally conjoined.

No, I will not be jealous until I feel that I can love better than any other. To give without asking, without receiving, without hoping anything, this for a proud heart is the greatest voluptuousness.

Poor Marie Bashkirtseff! Her proud aim was to reach such a grade of celebrity that she should attract all glances when she entered a room.

But when a whole room and a theater and a city acclaim me, I shrink and hide myself. No, this is not yet what I wish!

I would — I speak it to you softly and mysteriously — I would conquer Her whom alone I recognize as my rival.

The tumult of applause gives me not the

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smallest part of that radiant joy which would be mine did I but know that I should be loved and desired beyond the grave, forever. Do you understand? Could I be sure that a hundred years from now a soul would feel what I feel, *as* I feel it, and that such sympathy, repairing time, should meet me across the bounds and mystery of death, this, this would be my love, my ambition! Not a stage, not a public — No! No! — a soul like my own! Is not this the resurrection and the life?

Meditations under the elms.

In this world, to love the invisible soul-mate, the dear, the dreamed-of one, the unknown, the unattainable, whom we shall never meet, or to love in fractions — to love, that is, those portions which it is permitted us to attain, to gather these like precious gems, to make a circle of them, of which we may say, this is intelligence, this sentiment, this beauty, this genius, and upon such separate pearls to recite the rosary of our devotion, — which is to be preferred?

The first theory is the more ideal, the second the more human. But what is humanity? Am not I a member of humanity, and why shall I acknowledge in others a greater right than mine to determine which is the better life? The sole duty which man owes to men is not to disturb

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natural laws. Really, who can be more right than we ourselves?

What have men done for truth except invent systems? In philosophy, in religion, in morals, in art, in science, everything has been filtered through systems, but all the evangels and all the treatises reveal us nothing which we did not already know, which we have not already felt surge through our spirits, quiver in our nerves.

Every system makes a road, not one assures its limits.

Systems circumscribe ideals within given forms, and the need of the ideal is the absolute. Until this is shown me, I shall continue to believe that the first duty of man is research, ascent, slow, but sure and free.

Since in theory everything is ideal, and in practice nothing is so, to love and to cultivate our souls is the best employment of time for each and every one of us. It is an error to seek our happiness from others. The course of supreme happiness goes rather from us to others.

What physical pleasure does not pall? It is well that it is so. Eternity of pleasure is due the spirit, and we are spiritual. Two eyes, two hands, two feet, a mouth to eat, ears to hear withal, who possesses not these and who combines them not for the increase of his own proper delight?

But what is there in common between such

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pleasures and ours? There exists in nature a mysterious sense which reveals itself, and that hardly, to certain particularly responsive fibers of poets and seers, and which the masses ignore in the same way that inner chains of mountains and people of wood and grotto would deny the echo not conceded them. But as our way, so our happiness, and is not our duty plain — *Ascoltare la Voce* (Listen to the Voice)? *Per quia enim!*

Time presses, let us be up and doing.

I regret the years and powers lost. It seems to me that my mind now divests itself of old trappings, throwing aside old rags of being, and rises to the sight of purer heavens succeeding one another with promises of yet unheard of joys.

From my earliest reading I recall the legend of a fairy condemned to live always alone in a splendid palace. All the beauties of art adorned her dwelling, and nature herself was present in the ample and marvelous gardens. But the fairy longed for another self; love's natural instinct made her long for a being made in her likeness and image for whom to be beautiful. But this should not be. Not only should we not seek from our inferiors, not even from among our equals or superiors should we seek that greatest ideal, the fusion of souls. A soul which loses itself in another is at rest, and ends its mission. Our scope should be much higher.

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You said to me (Lawrence, I speak to you in the very nakedness of my soul robbed of all its illusions, you know this): "Let us be united; we are made for this." Did you think of *this* union? For we are united, — united as no other two human beings, in spite of distance and desertion, in the absence of all joy, all communication. The principle alone is ideal, and we are united in principle. What other advantage could our love have brought us? We are united in all we have loved together, in our common aspirations, and because we did not close our love within ourselves but set it free to all things beautiful and immortal.

The world is in danger, threatened by monstrous struggles. It is the hour of *sursum corda*. And just because all idols are beaten down and all standards despised, just because faith is no more, we will believe. Because we have searched the cold souls of sceptics we feel proudly the fervor of our own, and we will believe that it is not the ideal that falls, but only the powers of man.

The ideal does not fall, if by the ideal is meant that grasp of personal good and that dispassionate admiration of the good that exists outside of us: *to feel ourselves happy for this alone, that good exists.*

What hatefulness, what misfortune, can cancel the facts of beauty and happiness?

Wild longings spring suddenly from the

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shades of barbarous ancestry, rise and proclaim the rights of our race. I hear coming from distant mirages of light the voices of my precursors, of my soul's kinsmen, which incite and reassure me. Who are they? I see them not: warriors, princes, poets, martyrs for love, heroes of thought, or poor and humble people, poor souls having dwelt far from any fecundatory sun, unknown, uncomprehended, debased or great in the strength of the love which consumed them, — they all have a blazonry that I recognize as mine. They say to me: "Beauty is eternal, believe in her!"

Everything lies here — is it not so? — in understanding beauty, in having the soul to understand her in all her manifestations, and in not subjecting her to the miserable and vulgar thing called pain.

"The world is hateful," says the sceptic of the arid heart, "because I have suffered." (No, the world is beautiful because all sorrows lend themselves to a plan infinitely ideal.)

Great actors, when, from the exigencies of a drama, they must accept a small or antipathetic part, play their mean role with the same ardor, the same conscientiousness, the same perfection as they do the heroic. The pity is that there are so few great actors either upon the stage or in life.

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Imagine how harmonious existence would be if each one of us undertook to fulfil well the duty for which nature brought him forth! Is not the fool perhaps necessary to the man of intellect, as the cruel to the generous, the deformed to the perfect?

Those stars which most palpitate are thought the most beautiful of all. If the greater part of men suffer it is because they do not feel enough. They feel pain, which is a low grade of sensibility, and do not feel beauty, which is its coronation.

The man capable of understanding beauty in its most intimate and most complex signification will little heed a headache, and he who possesses the rare gift of creation, giving birth to a work of art, can control the agony of his heart. Pain, like pleasure, is only a means of life: the effects follow soon or late, the cause abides sole and immortal.

But these are not the words now current in the world. We are like the early Christians, — our religion is persecuted and derided. We have need to hide ourselves sometimes; we live in catacombs and have our watchword. The cult of our God has taken refuge at a little altar, at a bare sacramental table, palely lit with candles, among scant flowers, without incense, without attendant hosanna-singing choirs, but *it lives, it lives*, it must suffice for our hopes. If we are not happy, no matter, others will be so.

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I have not been in bed tonight. I have re-read these pages, thinking of You who inspired them and who perhaps will see them, perhaps will read them, so far distant from me —

I open the window, and above the horizon a rosy flush gladdens the eyes, vigil-weary. Day breaks!

Little loves, little sorrows, little cares of little souls, how they all vanish before the light! Arise, my soul, on through thorns and brambles, or through flowers, even on up to the stars! This is my last word.

*There is not a
sufficient happiness? - Truly
in the most perfect the most
integrity - in the most*



